

## 1. The Decision To Be Made

The sun was rising even with the treetops that could be seen from the paned window. The dew sparkled on the wild grass covering the unkempt yard. How rare a sight, today of all days; surely, nature knew what day it was. How could the mood in this house be so much at odds with the rest of the world?

The sunlight bathed the room in a yellowish glow highlighting the gold trim on the red curtains that adorned the windows. The mirror on the wall reflected only swirls and vague shapes that dare not take form. His eyes fell upon the sweet, beautiful creature sleeping in her bed so soundly. Her long jet-black hair was flowing out across the pillow like a stream cascading down over rocks. Her cheek partially covered by the black veil of hair. She looked so sweet, lying there. Her piercing green eyes were neatly concealed behind tightly shuttered eyelids.

“Oh the suffering you have endured all these years without your mother,” he said longingly. His head dropped remorsefully into his awaiting hands. His eyes screwed shut against the oncoming memories.

Twelve years it had been since that dark day. Though it started out much the same as today, bright and cheery, it ended far differently. The sun had been blocked out by dread and despair.

*The family awoke to the sun shining in off the sea. The air was warm and humid with a salty hint. What a wonderful start to our last day here he thought.*

*“I will visit the beach one last time before we head home,” he exclaimed. “Our daughter has always enjoyed the sand and water.”*

*“Yes, I think that would be nice,” a woman said from across the room. “I’ll head into the village and pick up a few things before we leave.”*

*The patter of little feet sounded through out the room. He sat up from the bed and saw that same face looking back at him. Jet-black hair and sharp green eyes met his gaze.*

*“Yes, we will go to the beach so you can play.”*

*The little one jumped up as well as she could, and scurried toward her room to get ready. The rustling of a bag could be heard.*

*"I will go help her," the voice spoke. "You had better get ready soon. Best not to keep her waiting long."*

*In minutes, the precious cargo was carried aloft on his shoulders headed to the beach at a quickened pace. The little girl ran directly toward the water and splashed in headfirst. Squeals of glee reported back to the adoring father. This was a wonderful place, a magical place. The hours flew by. Lunch came and went without notice. Sensing an aura of sleepiness about his daughter, he picked her up from the sand in mid yawn. She looked at him, peering straight into his heart. The hug that followed was only the kind a child can give.*

*On the walk back to the hotel, his darling fell asleep in his arms. He thought he would try the village before returning to his room. Surely his wife would still be shopping for this and that. He rounded the corner of the local market place and took a small alleyway that led to a row of shops that his wife had wanted to visit since their first day here. He glanced in the windows searching for her. After the first 4 shops showed no signs of her, he thought she might have bought so much she had quit early and headed back to the room. He turned around and was going to check 2 more shops before going home.*

*After the last shop, he headed back down the alleyway slightly puzzled. He passed by a very small walkway that intersected the alley when something caught his eye. The walkway glowed a greenish hue. A hue he hadn't seen for over 3 years. His heart leapt and he wheeled around and rushed down the walkway. As he came to the corner, his wand was firmly in his grasp. He turned the corner and was nearly knocked over by the sight.*

*He shook his head in an attempt to clear the image from his mind. He knew it wouldn't work, but he tried nonetheless. What a bright day for such a gloomy occasion. His eyes fell upon a letter he held in his hand. The scrawl was familiar, but more like a distant memory. A conflict waged in his head. 'How could I do this to her? Fourteen is hardly the time after all. No, I won't do this to her. It isn't fair; it isn't right.'*

Sam awoke with the sun on her face. An infrequent occurrence around here she thought, but a welcome change. She looked around, sensing she wasn't alone. She saw her father sitting in a chair at the foot of her bed. The same place he spent many a night comforting her when she had been scared by a bad dream or nightmare. He was sitting there shaking his head staring at a piece of parchment. The look of conflict on his face was obvious.

"Father, what is wrong?" Sam asked.

"Good morning my dear," Harry replied. "What? Oh, nothing."

"Father, you were never any good at lying to me. What is the letter about?" Sam queried.

"This?" Harry pondered his response. "A, well, it is a letter from my old headmaster."

"Professor Dumbledore?" Sam muttered. "What does he have to say?"

"He," Harry paused. "He says there is an opening at Hogwarts. A teaching position he feels I would do well at."

"Really," Sam replied reading her father's expressions. "So, what do you think about it?"

"I would love to go back and see everyone again," Harry said forgetting himself and becoming nostalgic. "I miss the good times with my friends." A smile crept across his face as he thought of good times in past years.

"So, we are going to move then?" Sam asked measuredly.

Snapping back to reality, Harry replied, "No. I couldn't do that to you. You are going into your fourth year at Salem. It wouldn't be fair to you, honey."

"No, you are right. It wouldn't be fair to me." Sam said with a plan in mind.

“Then, we are agreed. I will decline the...”

“You sitting around here casting protective charms and tracking death eaters is much more fair,” Sam interjected with a sarcastic tone. “I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

A wave of distress washed over Harry. He thought he had adjusted pretty well to staying home and raising his daughter.

“Dad, you need more in your life than just me,” Sam consoled her father. “What have you done in the last ten years that was for you?”

“I have done a lot,” Harry defended himself. “We took that trip to Chile when you were eight. We went to Japan three years ago.”

“I asked what you have done for yourself.”

Harry pondered the question. Thinking back through the years, every image he summoned from his memory seemed to revolve around Sam. All except...

“Dad, have you thought of any yet?”

“Well, yes, but you never mind about them,” Harry said defiantly.

“Dad, capturing death eaters doesn’t count,” Sam said curtly.

“What?” Cried Harry. “Now you don’t worry about them.”

“Father, I know about the three you caught,” Sam said confidently.

“What? What three?” Harry said without looking at his daughter. “I never said anything about catching death eaters.”

“No, you didn’t, but no one else did either,” Sam replied. “There was Johnson, when you were gone for three days. That was right before we went to Chile. Then, there was Morrison, the day before we left for Japan.”

“No one was identified in those captures,” Harry said with an air of finality.

Ignoring the tone, Sam plunged on. "I know, but I saw you when you read about them. You looked happy, satisfied. I know you caught them. Besides, you only bought the paper when someone had been captured. Don't deny it."

"Fine, I won't, but where is number three?" Harry questioned not wanting an answer in return. "If you are so smart, Ms. Potter?"

Sam looked right into her father's eyes, a near copy of her own. She took a deep breath and replied, "Lucius Malfoy. December, last year." Harry couldn't control his shocked response. "You were particularly worried after that one. I heard you at night walking around the house. I dared not open the door without you knowing before hand."

Harry flashed back to the night.

*He had reports of Malfoy lurking around an old village in northern Russia. It had been years since any reports showed merit, but Harry followed every one of them. This time started out no different than any of the others. He waited in the shadows of a shed, covered by his father's invisibility cloak. The hours drug on like preparing for a test. Even though it was an unusually warm winter, 10 below zero wasn't warm. The warming charm was doing its best, but the wind and bitter cold struck at the very core of Harry's body. It was just past two in the morning when a door to an inn opened and a figure crept out into the frigid night. Harry's hand rested on his wand in case of an attack. The figure skulked toward a house on the far side of the square. The house was as plain as the rest of the houses in the town. Not at all what a privileged Malfoy was used to in his life. Harry followed the figure quietly, waiting until they were in a more secluded area.*

*As they rounded a statue near the edge of the square, Harry called out.*

*"Lucius, you can't hide anymore."*

*The figure stopped and slowly turned toward the voice.*

*"Who is there?" the shaky, malevolent voice responded. The figure scanned the square intently searching for the speaker. After a few*

*seconds, the figure turned and quickly made for the house in front of him.*

*Harry pulled his wand from his cloak. He trained it on the figure. Harry took in a deep, silent breath. He thought of all the pain, suffering, and anguish he experienced through the years. Once all those images and feelings were in his mind, he spoke again in a deep, ethereal voice.*

*“Crucio!”*

*Before Harry left the scene, he approached the motionless heap of a body. He pulled back the hood to reveal the weathered face of Lucius Malfoy. The feeling of triumph replaced the anger and suffering. The happiness was almost too much to contain. Noises emanated from some of the houses in the square. Harry noticed illuminated windows in many homes. People would be on the scene shortly. Harry scrawled his prey’s name in the air with his wand and disapperated with a crack.*

*Harry gazed upon his daughter’s face. So much intelligence. Smarter than I was, am. She is so much like her mother. I am way out of league here.*

“I was concerned for your safety. If the others knew where we were, I couldn’t stop them all,” Harry said chokingly. “I failed before, never again!” Tears were welling up in his eyes as he looked upon his beautiful daughter. “I can’t fail you.”

“You didn’t fail.” Sam said holding back her own tears. “You weren’t there to stop what happened to mom. It wasn’t your fault.”

“I didn’t protect my family enough from the evils of my past,” Harry lamented. “The one death eater I have chased the longest has been the most elusive and dangerous of them all.”

“It is time for you to go home,” Sam informed her father. “Hiding doesn’t suit you. If you haven’t found her by now, maybe you should let her come to you.”

"That would put you, my most precious daughter, in danger," Harry said. "That isn't going to happen."

"You always told me that the safest place in the world was Hogwarts," Sam recalled. "Why are you forgetting that now?" Harry seemed lost in contemplation. "So are we going to sit here, hidden from everyone?"

"I will think it over and let you know," Harry said with a tone marking the end of the discussion. "OK?" Sam nodded. "Now, what should the agenda be for today? A walk, the zoo, a trip into town."

"No, that is common stuff," Sam answered. "How about some broom work?"

"OK, I have been saving a spot for just such an occasion. I can show you how to cast an anti-muggle charm on the area," Harry said happily. "It is above your level, but it isn't that hard to do."

"Agreed," Sam said beaming. "We will go at ten o'clock if that suits you."

"OK," Harry said accepting his orders. "Get up when you need to. I will be down stairs preparing for the day."

Sam watched her father leave and walk down stairs. That was the happiest I have seen him in years, and defiantly the happiest he has ever been on this day, Sam thought to herself.

The morning flew by until it was time to go on their adventure. Sam was dressed in muggle clothes so not to attract attention. Harry did the same and pulled an old fishing hat down over his scar making sure it was hidden. His unruly hair put up quite a fight, but in the end, the hat won out.

"Ready?" Asked Harry.

"Of course I am," Sam replied.

They left their home through the back door that was disguised as a dilapidated garage behind a neglected old house. Harry carried a

long brown bag with the tips of fishing poles sticking out the top. He completed the ensemble with a tackle box. Inside the bag a Firebolt 5 and a Firebolt 1 were safely hidden from muggle view.

"I don't believe I will ever understand the act of fishing my dear," Harry said as they walked along a path away from the village. "I never understood why muggles found it interesting."

Half an hour later, they came upon a grove of tightly packed trees. There wasn't a house in sight. Neither a structure nor any sign of people at all.

"This is a new place I have been saving for just such an occasion. Do you think it will meet our needs?" Harry asked his daughter.

"I think it is brilliant, father," Sam answered.

"Here, this is how you cast a protective charm on a location," Harry instructed. "It only works on muggles and some squibs. Swirl your wand counter-clockwise one and a half times. Say 'Aegis.' Then, circle back around one rotation and say 'abehom.'"

Sam tried it, but the result was less than perfect. The grass, where she directed the charm, simply laid flat.

"Good," Harry complimented. "That is better than I did my first time."

Harry cast the charm in four places around the grove. He hoped his aim was good enough to reach the far ends, because the grove was too large to walk around in the high grass.

"Now, we go inside," Harry urged.

Sam found the trees and underbrush to be dense; dense enough to block the view of any who wandered by. It took a minute or so to reach the inner edge of the trees. Once inside, Sam looked across a grassy field perfect for flying.

"Father," Sam stated. "This is wonderful. How long have you known of this place?"



“Long enough,” Harry spoke as he messed with the bag. “I come here during the day sometimes when you are at school. It is an excellent place to sit and think. Now, here you go. Be careful not to hit any trees.”

Sam turned and found her father holding out the Firebolt he used when he was at school.

“It has been nearly two years since you last let me ride it,” she said.

“I know,” Harry admitted. “Last time I found a muggle watching us from the tree line, and I kind of over did the memory charm. It took me a few tries to get back the last year of his memories. I hadn’t needed to use that one since before you were born. I felt it wise to find a better spot before we gave it another go, but only for special days. This warrants one. Don’t you think?”

“Yes, I think so,” Sam answered in a rush. “May I begin?”

“Of course my dear.” Harry watched his fourteen-year-old fly up and around the meadow many times. The broom still had quite a bit of pep left in it after all these years. Thirty minutes passed, and Sam was in full control of the broom. Harry yelled out, “how about a little bit of a challenge?”

“Sure,” shouted Sam! “What did you have in mind?”

Harry opened the tackle box and pulled out a golden, walnut-sized ball. Harry tapped it with his wand and muttered a few words. The snitch flew up and around Harry. Then it darted away from him with lightning speed.

“Was that your snitch?” Sam asked.

“Yes, it was,” answered Harry. “Now seek it. It won’t leave the meadow.”

Sam sped after it. Searching for a glint of light among the green and brown landscape, she spotted it far off in the southern edge of the arena. She lowered her body flush with the broom and streaked toward the flash of light. Everything was blurred and all she saw was

green, brown, blue, and that gold spec flitting around. She altered course to match the direction of the elusive quarry. She reached out and grasped the snitch with her left hand.

“Well done, Honey,” cheered Harry. “Well done. If you practice, you might best me one day.”

The daylight drifted away as twilight fell. Sam had been flying for hours and hours. Harry added a few bewitched dirt balls after awhile to simulate bludgers. Sam had a few stains on her clothes from where she dropped her guard. All in all, she did a spectacular job.

“Simply wonderful, Samantha,” Harry exalted. “I dare say you could make a few teams right now.”

“Dad, I was alone up there,” Samantha rebutted. “Dirt is far different than real bludgers too.”

“That may be, my dear, but the competition at Hogwarts will be more of a proper challenge,” Harry revealed.

“Then you have decided to take the job?” Samantha shrieked unable to hold back her excitement.

“I realized that keeping you here is only hurting you,” Harry said reluctantly. “Salem is a fine school, but they aren’t of the same caliber as Hogwarts. They concentrate on potions and charms, not defense and other necessary skills. The lack of a quidditch team has never sat well with me, and I know you will excel at that. Please, tell me if you have any reservations about making the change.”

“I have already packed half of my things,” Samantha informed her father. “I can be ready whenever you need me to be.”

“Alright,” Harry said thoughtfully. “I will send my response tonight and begin making arrangements for our travels. We will plan for a Saturday departure. Is that OK?”

“Yes, I will be ready,” responded Samantha, with her head full of thoughts.

They emerged from the trees; everything packed up as tightly as it was before. A wave of Harry's wand lifted the protection charms. The walk home was uneventful, but full of thought. Harry thought of the arrangements to be made, the favors to ask, and the many questions he would need to answer. He feared the guilt he would have the moment he saw his friends. But this move was for Samantha. If anything were to happen to him, she would be alone like he was. She needs someone who could give her a mother's touch if he 'wasn't' anymore. Someone to care for her, love her like she deserved. Sirius's care was short when it was needed most. He needed a better arrangement than he had years before. The Dursley's wrote him off the second they could without the wrath of Dumbledore coming upon them. He knew who should be her guardians. Who deserved the honor, but it would only be his luck if they had given up on him years ago. The conversations in his head pitched back and forth with no end in sight at least not until he saw them in person. Conflicted, he walked on in silence.

Samantha thought of a new place where she could make close friends. Being able to walk around without hiding who or what she was. They asked so many questions here. The people were nosey and wanted to know everything about everyone. They never left her alone always prodding her for information. Finally, a place to call home with a father who could admit he had a daughter. A father who would actually allow others to see him for who he really was, the best father she knew. She continued walking home as silent as her father.

## 2. The Reunion

Once Samantha had gone to bed, Harry sat down to write his letter to Dumbledore. The words were not materializing very quickly. After an hour of thinking, writing, and disposing, Harry had finished the letter. He tried to coax Hedwig down from her perch above the stove.

“Hedwig,” Harry implored her. “I need you to take this to Dumbledore.” Hedwig looked down at him in the most indignant manner. “I know I haven’t needed your service for many years, but this is important. The owl looked at him with a puzzled look about her face not knowing if he was serious or not. “Well, I guess if you aren’t up to it, I will have to go into town and use one of the school birds. You have gotten along in age and it might be too long of a trip for...”

Hedwig flew down onto his shoulder and smacked him in the face with her wing. “Now, that is more like it girl,” Harry said confidently. “Insulting your ability always works.” Harry attached the letter to Hedwig’s foot securely. The owl flew up to her cage, took a big drink of water, pecked at some food, and soared out the window Harry had opened. Harry called after her, “stay in England until I arrive, OK girl.”

The night was dark and cold for July. No stars shone through the low-lying clouds that had been forming since sundown. Harry swept today’s things into a cupboard before heading to bed himself. The next few days would be a trial in-and-of themselves. Packing up things that had not been touched for years. The memories might be more difficult to bear than he expected. No matter, the decision had been made. A little heart had wondrous ideas inside it waiting to spring out. It was too late to have second thoughts merely to save him from the past while he needed to move forward towards the future.

The morning of Saturday came, but not that anyone could tell. The clouds had only become thicker since Wednesday. There were rain showers off and on, but the sun was not visible. Samantha looked at her clock, it was only seven thirty in the morning, but she couldn’t help what she felt. The anxiety of moving was almost too much for her to bear. She had finished packing her things yesterday, but she was holding off on putting away her pictures. The one of her mom

holding her when she was born was the most precious of them all. The joy on her moving face was inescapable. She sighed, and loaded the pictures into her pack. She checked her locket one last time. The pictures of her mother and father were safely hidden inside. Only she could open the locket, a charm held it closed at all other times. Since it was her mother's charm that sealed it, only she could remove it. This occurring would be a welcome event, but Samantha knew that it wasn't going to happen.

"Honey, hurry up," Harry yelled up the stairs. "We need to make sure we have everything before we leave."

"Coming father," cried Samantha as she snapped the locket closed.

Inventory took all morning and right up to one o'clock. The crates were stacked as high as the ceiling three deep.

"I never knew we had this much junk," complained Harry. "It is a good thing I have a full bag of flu powder."

At precisely one thirty in the afternoon, the fireplace roared to life with green flames.

"That is the signal," Harry said. "This will take our stuff to a room at Hogwarts where it will be safe."

Harry threw a pinch of flu powder onto the flames before they died away. The fire roared alive again. Harry flicked his wand and yelled "Mobilierbus trunks." The trunks rose a few inches off the ground and slowly made their way into the fire. He looked like he was conducting an orchestra with the trunks playing the parts of the musicians. When the flames began to die down, another pinch of powder perked up the inferno.

"Dumbledore arranged a one way flu connection between our fireplace and Hogwarts," Harry explained to a slightly confused Samantha. After an hour and a half, the room was cleared of all their belongings. The house was empty. Darkness filled the vacant room. Harry looked around bidding his home one last farewell. Good memories of past days filled his mind. He fought back disturbing

feelings and images, long hoped buried. Harry cast his gaze on his darling daughter. So brave a child he had ever known.

Samantha looked up at her father who was staring at the empty room. She had only memories of him in this house; her mother escaped her ability to recollect. She shifted, scanning the room for anything that might trigger a memory. Nothing came to her. A hand rested gently on her shoulder followed by a short squeeze.

"It is time my dear," spoke a solemn Harry. "We must go now."

"I am ready, father." Samantha was prepared to leave the only home she had known for the uncertainty of a new place.

Harry opened his traveling bag, dug around for a few seconds, and withdrew a small yard gnome. He handed it to Samantha. She looked at it without a clue what its purpose was to be. Harry then pulled out the invisibility cloak and exchanged it for the gnome in Samantha's hand. Harry looked at the gnome, concentrated, and spoke steadily "Portus." The ornament glowed a light blue, and then looked as it did before. Harry set the cement fixture on the floor and looked at Samantha.

"Put on the cloak and keep it wrapped tightly about you until I say otherwise. Do you understand?" Harry questioned.

"Yes, father. I understand," replied Samantha.

"Keep close by me and touch nothing. I need to judge their reaction before I introduce you," Harry hesitated. "Are you sure this is what you want, honey?"

"Yes, let's get it over with," said Samantha barely able to stand the anticipation.

"We will count to three, and then we must touch the gnome at the same time," Harry instructed.

"One, two, three!"

The whoosh of air passing by their ears was quite loud. The tug at their stomach was forceful, yet reassuring. The noise seemed never to end, and then they felt the ground. A softer landing than expected. The air was moist and hung about them. It was nearly nine at night where they landed. Harry spun the hands on his watch to match the time.

"Sam, are you close? Harry questioned the heavy air in front of himself.

"I am here, show me where to go," was the response from something unseen.

Harry walked forward, towards a house at the base of a hill. It appeared to be an orderly house one of strong construction and planning. This was not exactly what Harry expected, but as he thought, it made sense to him. The sun, or what was left of it, was gently nestled behind the hill. The smell of food was about the air. A grand meal was either being made or had been served recently. The hands on his watch were nearing nine and that was the arranged time. A crack could be heard within the house before them. Shadows moved about from behind the colored panes of glass that made up the windows, but nary a voice escaped the walls.

After a deep, long breath, Harry stepped forward. He rapped the door with the knocker, a proud, stately griffin. He checked his hood up to ensure that it was completely covering his face. The door opened slowly to reveal a living room that would do justice to the exterior. A long, missing face greeted him. The man bid him to enter with a sweeping motion of his arm. Harry took long enough to enter so that he was sure they both made it inside. The red haired man looked much the same he did when Harry last saw him. Aside from a little extra padding around the middle, Ron was exactly the same. Ron closed the door and led them into the kitchen where two other familiar faces waited his arrival. The kitchen was spotless and more organized than the rest of the house.

The woman standing behind the table looked inquisitively at Harry. Trying to figure out the scene, which was playing out in her very kitchen. Hermione looked as pretty as ever despite her face being

screwed up deciphering this figure standing a mere few feet away. The last person in the room was sitting at the table, eating a chocolate frog. The long silvery beard piled in his lap quivering with every bite of the frog. Ron had joined his wife on the other side of the table, still looking for some answer to his many questions that this scenario had brought about.

Dumbledore looked right into Harry's shaded eyes and smiled. He looked to Harry's left and smiled again with a slight chuckle. Ron and Hermione looked at Dumbledore, then back to Harry not saying a word. Dumbledore reached for the glass of water in front of him and took a long drink washing down the last of the chocolate frog.

"So, are we to have an explanation for all this, Professor Dumbledore, or are we just," chirped Hermione.

Dumbledore raised his free hand cutting her off before she got into full swing. "I think these gracious people deserve an answer, do you not?"

Harry reached up and pulled the hood back revealing his mussed hair and lightning scar. The silence was deafening. Not even a choked breath escaped the best friends a person could have. Harry looked upon his comrades with sadness and hesitation. He didn't know what to expect after all these years.

Dumbledore smiled and viewed the spectacle as it played out. Hermione was the first to speak.

"Well," she thought. "It is about bloody time you came back. We have been worried sick." She stepped forward, her arms open searching for a hug long deserved. Harry, his heart nearly breaking from the tension, embraced her, as a friend should after such a long separation. Tears were welling up in both of their eyes. Hermione's were the ones to break free first running down her face.

After what seemed like hours, Harry eased his grasp and looked at Ron who stood where he had been, his mouth open. He appeared to have lost the will to speak. Harry stepped towards him with his hand out. Ron didn't move. Hermione cleared her throat causing Ron to regain control of his senses.



"I," he stammered. "I have missed you Harry." Ron hit Harry with a hug that felt like Hagrid was the one squeezing. Once Ron let go, Harry returned to the spot he started from.

Dumbledore was smiling so very brightly. A glimmer in his eyes betrayed his cheery façade. He rose from his chair; his beard fell into place just past his belt and hugged Harry. The firm grip didn't fit this elderly looking man.

"Harry, now that we have greeted each other, shall we discuss the reason behind your sudden return?" Dumbledore's question cut through the air like a sword.

Harry cleared his throat. The words he had planned for this evening seemed too far away to speak, lost in torrents of emotions. "I have returned, because it was long overdue," Harry started. Searching for words, he continued. "I have a favor to ask of you both." The looks he received were confused but steadfast at the same time. "I would like to introduce you to someone who means everything to me. More than the world, more than my own life." Harry turned to his left, nodding at the empty spot of floor to his left.

Samantha, having watched the situation unfold, slowly pulled off the cloak. Her long black hair flowed down her back. Her eyes shown in the well-lit kitchen like bright emeralds. She handed the cloak to her father and quietly stood still waiting for something to happen.

Hermione looked surprised for a second, but that quickly changed into an adoring smile very similar to the one Dumbledore had worn for the past few minutes. Ron was confused by this unknown girl standing in his house, next to his best friend in the whole world.

Harry began to speak, "Ron, Hermione, Professor Dumbledore, I would like to introduce you to Samantha Hermione Potter."

Hermione's eyes shot to Harry, a look of appreciation washed over her. She stepped forward to Samantha held out her hand and introduced herself. "Hello, Samantha, I am Hermione Weasley."

Samantha looked at Harry, who was fighting back tears of joy, and replied, "I am Samantha Potter. Pleased to meet you."

Hermione couldn't hold herself back and scooped Samantha up into a hug. Samantha found the embrace unexpected, but quite pleasant. Hermione looked at Harry with approving eyes and a sadden smile. When Samantha had been returned to earth, Ron introduced himself and shook her hand. He wasn't about to give in to womanly tendencies. Not in front of Dumbledore. Samantha found Ron to be agreeable, but not overly warm. About what she expected from the stories she had heard.

Dumbledore stepped forward from his chair. He bowed to Samantha and held out his long hand. "I am Professor Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It is so nice to make your acquaintance after all these years." His gaze provided the most securing feeling Samantha had felt other than her father's of course. "You look just like your mother aside from the obvious qualities only your father could have given to you."

"Thank you very much, Professor," offered Samantha. She felt like her family had just quadrupled in size. She found herself feeling sleepy after such a long, stressful day.

"I believe Samantha needs to get some rest for the night," Harry interjected.

"I will call down Lily. Samantha can sleep in her room tonight if that is OK," Hermione informed them all.

"Is that acceptable, Samantha?" Harry asked, receiving a nod in reply.

Hermione walked to the steps leading upstairs and called Lily's name. Footsteps could be heard above them racing towards the stairwell. Then, feet pattered down the stairs to the landing near her mother. "Yes, mum," came a smallish voice once the red-haired, freckled girl had seen all the people in her kitchen. Her view lingered on Harry apparently trying to figure out the situation. Then she took notice of another girl about her age.

"Lily, would you show Samantha up to your room?" Hermione questioned with an air of direction in her voice.

“Yes, mum,” answered Lily who bore a striking resemblance to Hermione only with red hair and freckles.

Samantha looked at Harry awaiting permission. Harry smiled and nodded wishing her a good night’s sleep. Lily led Samantha upstairs and they began talking right away.

Harry was beside himself. He had missed so much although his daughter had missed out on far much more. Friends, family, all the things Harry couldn’t give her in quantity. He was lost in his thoughts when he realized that Hermione was standing right in front of him. He swallowed hard knowing this discussion was going to take some time.

### 3. A Past Revisited

A slightly miffed Hermione sat Harry in a chair. She was planning her attack for the next several hours, it was written on her face. Harry tried to think how he could diffuse the situation before it spiraled out of control. That moment was fast approaching.

“Wonderful daughter you have there,” Harry said attempting to sidetrack the barrage that was about to befall him.

“Thank you, Harry,” replied Ron. “That is awfully nice of you to say. She is very dear to us, being the only girl.”

“Ron, don’t let him off that easy,” snapped Hermione. “You have so much to answer for, all these years.” A slight reddish tint appeared on Hermione’s face. “A simple compliment isn’t going to suffice. No sir.”

Ron rolled his eyes and shook his head. “Hermione, please? He has just got here,” pleaded Ron. “At least let him settle himself before you go off on him.”

“Shut it, Ronald,” barked Hermione turning to Harry. “You have missed birthdays, weddings, and everything in between. What do you have to say for yourself?”

“I have missed you both so much,” whimpered Harry. “It has been a long, long time. I had to get away for everyone’s safety. They would have come after all of you if I had stayed. Once they knew you didn’t know where I was, you were safe or as safe as you could have been. You couldn’t help them get to me, so you weren’t worth the risk of exposing themselves.” Harry paused remembering himself. “It has only been the two of us for twelve long, lonely years. Since her mother...” A long silence followed Harry’s half finished sentence. Dumbledore was the first to break the tension of the room.

“Do you know who it was, Harry?” questioned Dumbledore.

“Of course I do,” Harry said curtly. “Bellatrix led the attack.”

“Ah, yes. That explains part of it, but what did Marcus Brange have to do with her death?” Dumbledore prodded while returning to his seat.

“He was the first one I found after her, her body. He was laughing in the alley a few feet from her,” stated Harry with a blank look on his face.

Hermione felt a cold wind blow across her heart. She stared intently at Harry trying to read him, but he was like stone. She could feel the temperature drop. Her planned tirade seemed very unimportant now.

Harry continued, “She disappeared, I heard the crack, but he lagged behind reveling in his accomplishment. I set Samantha next to her motionless mother and hurried after the laughs. He must have heard my steps or my screams. I am not sure which, but he turned as I neared him. Before I knew what had happened, he was thrown down the alley by at least one of my curses.”

Hermione had tears in her eyes again. Ron was quiet, trying to think of something to say, but Dumbledore made the first move.

“The investigation reported that Marcus took at least two killing curses before he hit the ground. A muggle was watching from a window above the alley. He said he saw a steady stream of green light hitting Marcus in the chest. It took two aurors hours to wipe that image from his mind; I can only wonder what it did to you, Harry.” Continuing without an answer, Dumbledore asked his question again, “What did that do to you, Harry?”

“What did it do?” Harry answered. “It ruined my life, my daughter’s life. Everything changed at that moment. I do not recall the specifics of his death, but I felt neither joy, nor sorrow I can tell you that. I returned to Samantha who was still fast asleep next to her mother. I kissed her goodbye, grabbed Samantha and ran home. It has taken me twelve years to speak of this aloud. When my quest is done, maybe I will be able to continue my life. Live a more complete life without this weight hanging over me. There is only one left, only one.” Harry paused for a while. He snapped out of his trance when the sound of giggling emanated from upstairs. His heart warmed at the sound, a smile formed on his face. He had rarely heard that sound in the last few years. A very small tear appeared in the corner of his eye. His girl laughing shouldn’t bring him to tears, but it did.

Hermione had watched every expression, listened to every word. She was beside herself with grief for Harry. "Harry, is there anything we can do to help?"

Ron agreed, but turned to Hermione wondering where her anger had gone. He had never gotten off that easy before especially not for something this big.

"Yes. Actually there is something you can do for me and Samantha," Harry said. "If anything happens to me, will you take care of Samantha? That is all the help I dare ask from either of you."

Hermione and Ron exchanged brief glances and replied.

"Of course we will." "No worries mate." "It is the least we could do."

"Harry?" asked Dumbledore. "Would you like to explain Lucius Malfoy before we venture to far off topic?"

"What about Lucius? He was caught last December," said Harry.

"Yes he was, but he was found in the most gruesome manner if I recall correctly," Dumbledore said coolly.

"What? I found him, subdued him, and left him for the aurors," Harry said blandly.

"They found him all right," said Dumbledore sounding a little shocked. "He was still smoldering from the Cruciatus curse you used on him. He was wrapped upon himself. Would you like to explain how such a vicious attack occurred?"

Hermione and Ron hadn't heard this before. The only details released were his capture and death resulting from his capture

"He found out we were Africa," Harry said drifting back into a glazed over state. "He gave Bellatrix our location. That is how they found us. How they killed her. She was innocent. She had done nothing wrong but fall in love with me. He was not innocent. He wheeled around with his wand in his hand ready to strike. I had the advantage, fortunately. My curse hit him first, there was no missing him."

*The square was lit with red light amidst the frigid, cold air. The figure riled in pain. "He flailed and thrashed about like a fish out of water. All I saw was her lying there, dead. My baby girl curled up to her arm.*

"When the feelings of anger and hate subsided, that was when I noticed the village stirring."

"Harry, you killed him with your pain, your hate, your anguish. Hasn't there been enough evil for one lifetime?" Dumbledore stared at Harry with a sad look on his face waiting for a response.

"I have seen far too much for one lifetime, yes," Harry answered. "I still have a debt to repay, but that is not why I am here. I need to know Samantha will be protected and loved should something happen." Harry looked at the people sitting around the table. One was stunned, one was in tears, and the other was sad and pained. "Because of your letter, I am here. A new start for Samantha and a job for me might help me get beyond my past. Samantha convinced me to accept the position, to move on. She is my sanity and has been for many years. She deserved better than what we had. I knew this was the best thing for her future."

"And what of your future, Harry?" Dumbledore drove this point unrelenting. "What of your future? Do you see yourself with us next year? In Ten years? Will she have a father or a surrogate, red haired family?"

Harry pondered this scenario. It was not at all to his liking. None whatsoever. "Well, yes. I see myself with her. I see her in many years to come, actually. That is what she needs. That is what I will do for her. I will try to put my anguish aside for everyone's benefit. Samantha has, at least, earned that from her father. I will protect her with all that I am, with all that I have. Remember that, Sir."

The room was quiet all except for the clicking of a clock that was undoubtedly in the next room. "I accept your explanations of past events, Harry," Dumbledore said cautiously. "But moving forward, I will not accept such rash, hate-filled actions. Hogwarts is not a place to harbor ill feelings nor is it a place to launch attacks of revenge even upon those who deserve them." The issue seemed concluded to all within hearing range.

“So, Harry,” Dumbledore began after a long pause as if they had simply met on the street. “Do you accept my offer of the teaching position this year?”

“It would be an honor, Professor,” replied Harry with a long lost feeling of moral purpose welling up from inside. “If I am still your first choice that is?”

Dumbledore rose to his feet, adjusted his cloak, and responded, “Of course you are, Harry.” With that statement, Dumbledore bid a goodnight to everyone, hugged Harry once more, and disappeared without another word.

Harry stared at the spot where Dumbledore had last stood. He was thinking how lucky it was to have such an understanding man he called his friend. Harry turned towards Ron and Hermione who had moved closer together. “Lily, huh. I have always liked that name.”

“It seemed to fit when we first saw her,” said Hermione. “She is a wonderful child.”

“Do you have any more?” asked Harry.

“There is Sirius, fourteen. James is twelve, and of course Lily. She is thirteen,” said Hermione proudly.

“Sirius is a beater for Gryffindor and Lily is going to try out for chaser,” Ron added, as a proud father should. “James plans to wait until next year before trying out.”

“Samantha is fourteen as well?” Questioned Hermione.

“Yes, that is right,” said Harry. “I hope she will tryout when she gets a chance. She seems to be quite good at seeker.”

“Really?” Chirped Ron. “Gryffindor needs a good seeker this year. We lost ours this year. Wasn’t as good as you, mate, but he did well enough.”



"She hasn't played on a team, but the few times I have been able to take her out she has impressed me more than I can say," Harry beamed.

"Don't they have Quidditch, where ever you were?" Ron asked nearly beside himself.

"She was at Salem before, but they really don't have a secluded place to play," said Harry. "There are too many muggles around at all times of the day. It would have been a nightmare trying to arrange even one match."

"Oh, she went to Salem," Ron seemed satisfied. "They have had issues trying to organize events around there. We have been working with them for some time, but I fear there are too many obstacles."

"Ron works for the Department of Magical Games and Sports," Hermione said. "It has been, what, eight years, Ron?"

"Has it been that long?" said Ron in deep thought. "It has been eight years. Wow, I never would have guessed it had been that long. Well, you know how times flies when you are busy."

"Not really," said Harry crushing the mood with two words. After saying those words, Harry tried to salvage the situation the best he could, "But I can guess how it could. Having three kids and such a wonderful job."

Hermione quickly continued the conversation trying to avoid a disaster. "Ron keeps busy with his games or events. I have been at Hogwarts for almost eleven years now."

"Really?" asked Harry.

"I took over for Minerva when she retired. I was sad to see her leave, but I love my job."

"Go figure, huh," said Ron trying to keep his voice down.

"It suits you, Hermione," said Harry cutting off Hermione and saving Ron from a tongue-lashing. "Dumbledore couldn't have made a better

choice if you ask me. So, why do you only have three kids?" Asked Harry looking at Hermione for an answer, but it was Ron who fielded the question.

"After James, I didn't know where anything was or which end was up," said Ron shaking his head. "How my parents handled seven, I'll never know. And none of ours even come close to rivaling Fred or George let alone both."

Harry saw Hermione shaking her head slowly as to avoid detection. "So, how are Fred and George?"

"They are doing really well," Ron explained. "They expanded their shop, oh, a few years ago. They bought out Zonko's in Hogsmeade after they had to expand their Diagon Alley store. They are doing just fine."

"They are still bachelors," interjected Hermione. "They will have to stop being children before any woman would think of marrying them. Think, those two being responsible for a child, that has catastrophe written all over it."

"Hermione," cried Ron. "You should not say such things about family."

Harry watched the two bicker back and forth. It was like they were back in school, only they had improved their skills many times. Harry waited for a lull in their 'discussion', which seemed to take forever. "How are your parents, Ron?"

"They are fine," said Ron recovering from the row. "Mum is still as fussy as ever, and dad is busy with ministry stuff. I do not know how he gets anything accomplished with all the politics getting in the way."

"Politics?" Said a confused Harry.

"Yeah," said Ron matter-of-factly. "The Minister of Magic has to deal with all the department infighting. And on the rare occasion something really important comes up, there are ten people asking him if they could handle it for him. They are just kissing up trying to get a promotion. Little do they know, Dad hates that stuff."

"I didn't know," said Harry shocked at the news. "When did that happen?"

"About fifteen years ago," pondered Ron. "Yes. Right after it out got that Fudge was 'miss directing funds' into his pocket. It was a huge scandal, but most of us knew he wasn't playing by the rules. Dad just listened to what Dumbledore had been saying for years and started working his way into higher profile discussions and events. Once Fudge was on his way out, Dumbledore suggested his name for the next Minister. The committee needed someone who wasn't interested in the trappings of the job to make up for Fudge's indiscretions. Dad was beyond reproach in that respect. So the vote was strongly in favor of approving him."

"I shall have to congratulate him when I see him again," said Harry determinedly. "Are the rest of your family still around here?"

"Not really," commented Ron. "Bill moved to France with Fleur. She said she missed her family and away they went. They visit a few times a year. Charlie went back to Romania to be an assistant at the school there. He couldn't stay away from the dragons for long."

"Ginny is the Charms teacher at school," said Hermione. "Flitwick retired only a few years ago. I think he is relaxing at home now after so many years teaching. My parents are doing well. They are still dentists, but they only work part-time now."

"So much has changed since I left," said Harry. "Well, I am here now and we will make a new life for ourselves."

"Ron," said Hermione. "It is your turn to make sure the children are asleep."

"Yes, dear," replied Ron as he got up and walked towards the stairs.

Once out of sight, Harry asked Hermione, "Why did you shake your head when Ron was talking about Fred and George?"

"He doesn't hear about most of the things that happen at school," answered Hermione. "James rarely makes it more than two weeks without a detention. He makes up for Lily and Sirius with enough left

to spare. I dare say Fred and George are feeding him tips on how to cause trouble. If I catch them encouraging this type of behavior, it will be the last thing they do."

"I am honored by the names you chose, Hermione," said a grateful Harry. "It means a lot to me."

"Well, both of us decided on the names. So, thank Ron as well. Samantha Hermione no less," beamed Hermione.

"Samantha was her grandmother's name on her mom's side. At least I got to pick the middle name."

"What was she like, Harry?"

"Allison? She was the most generous, understanding person I have ever met, present company excluded of course," Harry said getting misty eyed. "When she met me, she didn't ask too many questions. She mostly listened. We just seemed to click. It was over a year before we got married. We had to keep it a secret for her protection. Only her parents and Dumbledore were witnesses. We enjoyed each other's company and spent as much time together as we could. Samantha was born a year later. It was the happiest day of my life." Harry looked at the ceiling knowing his daughter was sound asleep above him. "Hermione, would you mind being her godmother?"

Without a moments thought, "Of course I will. I see how much she means to you."

"Thank you. I need someone to be there in case...she should never be alone like I was." The two of them stared at each other remembering the good times. "Samantha will be attending Hogwarts this year. Dumbledore has arranged the transfer from Salem so I didn't have to make it known I was her father. This is a fact that should not be made public until the time is right. I trust your judgment on who you tell, but I would prefer to keep it within your family if at all possible. Samantha will use her mother's last name, Brooks."

"Ron and I will watch ourselves," stated Hermione. "Arthur and Molly would be very interested and pleased to hear this. Would it be alright to tell them?"

“Yes, that would be fine,” acknowledged Harry. “What about Lily? She seems so much like you so she is bound to figure it out in the near future.”

“I will speak with her. I am confident she will be able to conceal the truth until you come public,” said a proud Hermione. “We will talk to the boys in the morning and explain things. They will understand the importance of everything, but I will keep a more vigilant eye on them this year. The school, on the other hand, will not be able to contain itself when they hear you are back. Many of the last names will be familiar and their parents will be as excited as the children if not more so.”

“I will stay hidden until I take my post as the new defense teacher. Dumbledore doesn’t plan to tell the teachers until the week right before term starts. He felt this would limit the risk to all concerned.”

“Makes sense to me,” said Hermione. “It is getting late and we have had so much excitement for one night. The couch is yours if you would like. I will warn you, the children are not quiet in the morning.”

“It will be more than enough, Hermione,” thanked Harry. “You are being too kind to me.”

“I know, but what else could I do to someone who sneaks into my house with a child in tow. We had no idea what Dumbledore had planned for tonight. He just told us to send the kids to bed early and wait for him to arrive around nine. I bid you goodnight then,” Hermione said as she stood up and hugged Harry one last time before retiring to bed.

Ron returned from checking on the kids and wished Harry a goodnight as well. The now darkened first floor had a warm charm to it very similar to the Burrow but without all the disorganization. Hermione kept a clean house, Harry thought, expecting nothing less. The couch was very soft and enveloped Harry the moment he laid down. Sleep rushed over him, he was finally home again after such a long delay.

#### 4. A Return to Hogwarts

The morning came with the sounds of children running around upstairs. Harry sat up replaying the night in his head. What will the kids say when they found him in their living room? How will they handle the news? Two girls racing down the stairs shattered the anticipation. Lily was the first to greet him.

"Hello. Did you sleep well?" asked Lily.

"Yes, I did," answered Harry. "Thank you for letting me stay in your home."

"My mom talked to me this morning, she said you are Harry Potter, but I can't tell anybody. Are you really Harry Potter?" quizzed Lily.

"Yes, I am, and she is correct that you need to keep this a secret," reinforced Harry. "But more importantly, no one must learn that Samantha knows me. OK?"

"I understand," Lily said. "She is a lot of fun. James broke my omnioculars last week and she fixed them with her wand last night. When James saw that this morning, he was mad and tried to break them again, but they wouldn't."

"I am glad you like her," Harry said. "Would it be OK if she stayed here until you went back to school?"

"Oh yes," cried Lily gleefully. "Then we would have an even number. Sirius and James would have to include me in their games then. They always say odd teams aren't fair so I never get to play."

"Wonderful," said a relieved Harry. "I need to ask your parents first though."

"Don't worry, I already did," said Lily with very Hermione-like voice. "She loved the idea."

"Good morning father," said Samantha. "Did you sleep well?" "Yes, I did, honey," replied Harry. "How about you?"

"Lily and I talked for awhile about all sorts of things before we finally fell asleep," informed Samantha. "Are you serious about me staying? I do like it here."

"Seeing how Hermione has already said yes, I don't see why not," Harry said. "I will be here as much as I can, but there are bound to be times that I can't. OK?"

"I understand," acknowledged Samantha. "Is it alright if I go out and play with Lily?"

"Of course," Harry said smiling. "Go and have fun, but remember what we discussed. No one must know yet. I will tell you when. OK?"

"I understand. See you later, father," said Samantha following Lily to the front door.

The door closed as Ron came downstairs adjusting his collar. "Sleep well, mate?" asked Ron.

"Yes, and you?" asked Harry.

"Not at first, but yes. I am still getting used to you being here," said Ron. "It has been so long. Sorry about Hermione last night. She was just shocked, that is all."

"You have no reason to apologize for me, Ronald," snapped Hermione coming down the stairs. "He got less than what he deserved."

"Now, don't you start in again," retorted Ron. "I think he has been through enough already."

"Please, don't fight on account of me," implored Harry knowing they didn't need a reason as good as him to fight about this early in a day.

"Don't be ridiculous, Harry," said Hermione. "Ron shouldn't be speaking for others, least of all me." This statement received a scowl from Ron and a smile from Harry. "I took the liberty of speaking with the boys already. They understand the situation, or so they told me."

Hermione's voice rose to a higher level, "they will be down as soon as their rooms are in order."

The threesome walked into the kitchen and Hermione put some water on the stove. Ron and Harry sat down at the table. A pecking sound came from the kitchen window. Hermione opened the window and a very small owl fluttered in with a copy of the Daily Prophet tied to its leg.

"Pig, stop flying around my head," cried Ron snatching the bird from the air. He untied the string from Pig's leg, and opened the paper. Pigwidgeon took off at once and flew over to Harry. He circled Harry again and again. Harry held up his finger for Pig to land on. Pig found the perch to be acceptable enough to land on and did so after one last circle.

"How are you Pig?" Asked Harry. "It has been a longtime."

Pig hooted at Harry for a few seconds before Ron told him to shut up already. Pig took off from Harry's hand and flew around the kitchen once more and then zipped out the open window. Harry's eyes followed the little owl around the room and out the window, but his gaze landed on his daughter playing outside with Lily. They were laughing and poking around in the tall grass on the side of the hill.

Ron flipped through the paper rather fast. "Nothing good. Same stuff as usual," said Ron. He folded the paper and tossed it on the table.

"I want to thank you again for taking in Samantha," said a relieved Harry. "It means so much to me."

"No big deal, Harry," was Ron's response. "Hermione mentioned you asked her to be Samantha's godmother."

"And would you be willing to be her godfather?" Asked Harry noting a slightly jealous tone to Ron's voice.

"Of course I will," Ron said looking more relieved. "It would be an honour."



"Thank you. Both of you." Harry felt more secure in his daughter's future now. She would be taken care of if anything happened.

There was a ruckus coming down the stairs. Harry turned to watch two boys come racing down the stairs. They knocked over an arrangement of flowers and vases near the stairs. The crash of pottery resounded through the living room and into the kitchen. Ron didn't flinch at the noise, but Hermione's reaction was the complete opposite.

"How many times have I told you? NO RUNNING IN THE HOUSE!" Hermione was advancing on the scene drawing out her wand. A flick of it and the mess was cleaned up and the decorations were repaired. The boys looked past her and straight at the visitor in their house. "How many times, boys?"

"We are sorry, mother," said the older boy. He looked right at Harry, lingering on his forehead. They made their way to the kitchen, Hermione on their heels scolding them. When there was a lull in the reprimands, the elder brother stepped forward.

"Hello," said the older boy. "I am Sirius, and this is my brother James."

"Nice to meet you Sirius, I am Harry," said Harry looking over the boy. He was taller than Samantha by two inches or so, but he had his father's taller slender build. He looked at James and said hello.

"Hello," replied James. "So are you Harry Potter like mom said you were?"

"Yes, I am, can't you tell?" Asked Harry. James had a very direct approach to things. He didn't waste time; he shot straight to the point.

"Yeah, you have the scar and you look like the picture mum and dad have on the wall upstairs," James stated. "So, you are Samantha's dad then?"

"Yes, I am. I heard you met her this morning," Harry said.

“Sure did. She fixed Lily’s omnioculars,” said James. “How did she do that? You aren’t supposed to use magic out of school.”

“Ah, well,” Harry started. “Salem doesn’t have those rules. Until she starts at Hogwarts this year, she is not prohibited from using magic.”

“But that isn’t fair,” cried James. “I tried to break them again, but...”

“James, you did what?” Yelled Hermione.

“He was just testing Samantha’s repair charm, Hermione,” said Harry trying to save James from another scolding. “She is well skilled in charms. It would take a lot to break them again”

James took advantage of the break in his mother’s train-of-thought and headed for the door outside wishing Harry a good day. Sirius stepped up and examined Harry.

“Bloody hell,” said Sirius under his breath.

“Sirius, watch your tongue,” snapped Hermione. “That is no way to welcome our guest.”

“But mum, this is cool,” said an impressed Sirius. “It really is him.”

“Out you get,” snapped Hermione. “Watch your brother, and keep an eye on your sister. We do not want any extra attention right now. Understand?”

Sirius went outside as instructed assuring his mother that he would keep everyone in line. Harry watched him head over to the others near the hill. They laughed at James who did something funny, and then they ran out of site of the window.

“Sorry about that, Harry,” said Hermione. “Sirius has always liked the stories his father told him.” Ron looked toward Hermione finding a glaring look on her face.

“I never said anything that wasn’t true, Hermione,” explained Ron. Hermione just snorted and went back to preparing breakfast. “Well,

the kids seemed to like you just fine. They seemed to take to Samantha rather quickly too.”

“I am not surprised by that,” said Harry. “She has her mother’s charm. A very likeable person she was.”

Breakfast went by quickly. The three of them discussed what had been going on in their lives the last sixteen years. Ron and Hermione had more to talk about, but that was just fine by Harry. He enjoyed hearing them talk. It had been so long since he had just relaxed and listened to his friends. Hours seemed to go by, but that didn’t seem to matter to any of them. The kids returned for lunch. They seemed to bond pretty well in the short time they had been together. This made Harry very happy.

“How was your morning, Samantha?” Asked Harry.

“It was great,” began Samantha. “Sirius, James, and Lily are great fun. I really like it here. They have a pond on the other side of the hill full of frogs and other creatures.”

“I am glad you are enjoying it, Honey,” said Harry quite pleased that things were working out so well.

After lunch, the kids went outside again. They could be heard every now and then through the open window. After the kitchen was cleaned up, the old friends moved into the living room to continue their stories. Some were funny, others not so much. Harry was in the middle of a story about Samantha’s first day of school when he heard two cracks outside.

He shot up from his chair, wand in hand. Ron and Hermione jumped in their seats, startled by his actions. Harry cautiously made his way to the back door, mumbling something to himself. Ron and Hermione jumped to their feet, following after him.

“Harry, calm down,” said Hermione with a tremor in her voice. “It should only be Arthur and Molly. They visit around this time.” It was obvious that his friends were not used to the stress of constantly being on guard. They had grown comfortable over the years.

Harry pivoted on the spot, his wand still at attention ready to attack. "Are you sure?"

A knock came from the front door Ron went to answer it keeping an eye on Harry who looked as though he would strike any minute. Harry sunk back towards the wall in the kitchen, ready for anything. Ron opened the door and said hello to who was there. Arthur and Molly Weasley entered the living room greeting their son and daughter-in-law. Harry stepped forward into the doorway putting his wand away in one fluid motion similar to how he had drawn it moments ago. Molly was the first to spot him. She let out a shriek, and then ran to him.

"Harry, dear. Oh how good it is to see you again." She nearly knocked him over when she collided into him with a huge hug. Tears were falling from her eyes. Though she had not seen him in years, it felt like time had not dampened her concern for him. Arthur was not far behind Molly. They both hugged Harry like the parents he considered them to be. Harry felt like he was a kid again back in the Burrow. When they had finished squeezing the life out of him, the back door burst open. A breathless Samantha stopped in mid run, wand poised to strike. She stood there scanning the room. She saw her father standing amidst a sea of red-haired people.

Molly stared at Samantha. She saw the scared look on her face. Her bright green eyes searching for an answer to a question that had not been asked. Molly saw something in this child that was familiar but she could not put her finger on it.

"It is ok, Samantha," Harry said calmly. "This is Arthur and Molly Weasley. They are the closest thing I have to parents." Samantha smoothly returned her wand to its location.

On those words, Molly knew who this girl was. She stepped forward and offered Samantha her hand. "I am Molly. Nice to meet you my dear."

"I am Samantha," she looked at her father receiving a nod. "Samantha Potter."

Molly couldn't hold herself back; she scooped Samantha up into hug that one would get from a grandmother. Samantha's uneasiness

subsided while the embrace enveloped her. Arthur followed Molly's lead and did much the same. Harry found the scene very warming. His daughter had grandparents now as well.

The other children rumbled into the kitchen disrupting the heart filled moment. They saw Samantha being returned to her feet. "Grandma, grandpa," cooed Lily.

"Hello children," replied the elder Weasleys. "I trust you are staying out of trouble?" Questioned Mrs. Weasley.

"Yes, grandma," Sirius said. "We were just playing and Samantha took off back here. We didn't know why she ran back."

Hermione looked at Harry finding a concerned expression on his face. "Well, she must have heard your grandparents arriving, that is all. Now out you go while we talk." The Weasley children knew better than challenge such an order and went back outside. Samantha followed with a reassuring smile from Harry.

Samantha closed the kitchen door behind her and followed the others up the worn path over the hill. They headed back to the pond at the edge of a group of trees.

"Why did you take off like that?" Asked Sirius.

"I heard them apparate and I wanted to see who it was," answered Samantha.

"You must have really good ears," commented Lily.

Samantha smiled and knew better than to say anything more.

A few weeks came and went. They played with the frogs and wandered around the field telling stories about school and friends. The grove of trees offered a quiet place to roam around. Samantha liked the others. They loved to have fun and seemed to like having her around. Lily treated Samantha like a sister almost. Being the sister of two brothers must have been hard. She had always wanted a sister and Lily seemed to fit that role quite well. Sirius did what big brothers were supposed to do. He was never too far away from any

of the younger kids. He made sure they didn't get into anything they shouldn't within reason. He kept James in line the best he could, but that kid could cause trouble no matter how many brothers were watching him.

One morning while everyone was sitting at the table eating breakfast a large brown owl came to the window. Hermione let him in and removed the parcels from his legs.

"Your letters are here children," said Hermione. She handed them out to Lily, Sirius, and James. Samantha got one too. The others opened theirs up right away and started scanning the pages.

Samantha opened the official looking letter; it was addressed to Samantha Brooks. Inside the letter warm words welcomed her to Hogwarts and listed all the books and supplies she was going to need for the year. She was very excited to be attending Hogwarts finally. She had heard so much about it.

"Aw cool," cried Sirius. "*The Dark Arts and Their Defenses*, by Alastor Moody. That is a serious book. Finally we are going to have a real dark arts class. Anyone who would pick that book knows what's what."

Hermione smiled at the news. She looked at Samantha and smiled again. "That is nice dear, you should learn a lot in that class this year."

"Mrs. Weasley, when will I go and get my things for school?" Asked Samantha.

"I figured we could go today if everyone is up for it," answered Hermione.

"Will my father be coming with?" Inquired Samantha.

"No, I am afraid that he is busy with Professor Dumbledore for the next few days," explained Hermione. "Besides, he feels he should stay out of sight for a little while longer."

"I understand," Samantha said with an air of disappointment to her voice. She had wanted her father to take her shopping for her supplies. It was going to be their time before school started.

"I know you want him to take you but hopefully I will do for now." Hermione had a pained look in her eyes.

"That sounds great," said Samantha but her heart wasn't behind those words.

After breakfast, the four children and Hermione took the floo network to Diagon Alley. Samantha kind of liked traveling by floo powder. It was exciting. She found herself in a large shop. There were candies along one wall and other magical items along another. Hermione and the kids were talking to two men who had to be family. The twins had red hair and devilish looks in their eyes.

"Oy, and who is this?" Asked one of the men.

"This is Samantha Brooks," said Hermione looking around the shop spotting a few other shoppers. "She is a new transfer student and Dumbledore asked me to help her get her things for school."

"Hello, Samantha, I am George and the ugly one over there is Fred," George walked over and shook her hand. A wand flew across the room and hit George in the side of the head causing flowers to rain down on the floor and stems to sprout up at least two feet from the spot of collision. Samantha giggled at the sight of this.

"Watch what you say brother. There is more where that came from if you open your trap again," said Fred a little miffed.

Hermione shook her head and hustled the kids out the door before sparks started flying. "Never mind them Samantha. They are troublesome children that never grew up," Hermione said. She never noticed Fred slipping James a small package.

The group made the rounds to all the shops. Samantha needed extra time at Madam Malkin's Robes For All Occasions. She needed a full set of robes, because at Salem their colors were green not black. A woman measured her and made up the robes in a flash.

"There you go my dear, a full set that should last you at least two years as long as you don't sprout wings," said the elderly lady.

Samantha found Hermione next-door getting parchment and quills trying to keep James from getting into trouble. They left the shop and headed to Flourish and Blotts. There were people everywhere. Hermione told the others to stay outside while she and Samantha went in to get the books. They squeezed through the throngs of people pushing and showing trying to get their kids books. Samantha found a nice corner out of the way. Hermione would bring over stacks of books every now and then. Another girl fought her way over to the corner carrying an armload of books.

"Hi, can't stand the crowds," said the girl. "I am Miranda, but everyone calls me Mira."

"Hi, I am Samantha."

"Are you new here, I haven't seen you around before?" Asked Mira.

"Yes, I am transferring this year," said Samantha. "What year are you in?"

"Fourth. I am in Gryffindor. Do you know which house you would like to be in?" Questioned Mira.

"I hope to be in Gryffindor too," said Samantha.

"There you are Mira. I was wondering where you got to," said a woman.

Hermione muscled her way through a wall of people and stood by Samantha. "Hello Parvati, how are you?" Asked Hermione in kind of a hurry.

"Hermione, how good to see you again," replied Parvati. "Is this one yours? Not quite your type is she?"

"She is Samantha, mum. She is transferring to Hogwarts this year," explained Mira. "She hopes to be in Gryffindor."



"I would be shocked if she was in any other house, Mira," said Hermione.

"Yes, Professor."

"Well, we should make our way to the counter if we want to get out of here before dark," urged Hermione.

"Yes, Mrs. Weasley," said Samantha taking the cue. "Goodbye Mira, see you at Hogwarts."

"Bye."

"Mira is a good student, but her mother is nosy. I thought it best to limit our conversation," said Hermione.

"I understand," responded Samantha.

They paid for the books and left the store pushing their way out. The others were sitting at a café across the street waiting. Once the group reformed, they picked up potion ingredients and headed back to Weasleys Wizard Wheezes. They bid the twins a good day and flooded home. James receiving another covertly exchanged package.

The heat of the summer was not as bad as it had been the previous years. One week before the start of term, Harry found himself standing at the gate leading into Hogwarts. It had been so many years since he had last been here. The memories were flooding back racing through his mind. He saw the lake where he had spent many hours with Ron and Hermione. The Quidditch pitch where he won so many matches. The memories were almost too much to control. He pulled his hood over his head and stepped forward onto the grounds. He strolled to the doors between the winged boars. A flash of heat and pain seared his forehead. Harry staggered a bit, but regained himself quickly. It had been over sixteen years since he had felt that pain. Being back here must have made him remember all those times he had felt it. He shook his head, trying to forget those bad times.

He made his way to the teachers lounge and stepped into the quiet room. Books lined the walls and worn leather furniture populated the room. He found a high-back chair in front of a window to his liking. He

sank into the cushion and rested his eyes waiting for the others to arrive. After some minutes, he heard voices outside the room. The door opened and in walked a tall lanky man with short curly hair. A dark, greasy haired man that Harry had never wanted to see again followed him. Snape stared at him as their conversation died instantly. The tall man wandered over to a far wall and sat down, not saying another word. Snape maintained a stoic appearance examining Harry for any clues as to who he was. Voices of others in the hall broke the tense silence. Snape sauntered over to the far wall and took a seat. The next people through the door were Hermione, Ginny and Neville. Hermione saw Harry, but kept talking. Ginny stopped short causing Neville to run into her. They looked at Harry for a moment but cleared the doorway allowing Dumbledore to enter.

When everyone had found a seat, Dumbledore began. "There are others who were unable to attend this meeting, but I am glad we have so many of you here today. I am sure you have all noticed our guest by now, but that will come later."

Harry sat in his chair listening to Dumbledore speak of the direction he wanted the year take. It was like he was sitting at the house table listening to the start of term speech Dumbledore gave every year when he was a student. Harry felt an odd sensation in his head. It was like someone poking around looking for something. Harry turned his cloak-covered head towards Snape who was eyeing him closely. Harry closed his mind to the prodding and simply said, "*Not this time, Severus.*" Snape's body snapped to attention like a soldier. He had a very puzzled look on his face that fell into a sneer. Whether he knew or not, it did not matter. Dumbledore finished his speech and then announced what everyone had been waiting for.

"I have found a new teacher for the Defense Against the Dark Arts. I am confident that this one will not be so easily scared off nor forced into retirement." Everyone's eyes were on Harry at this point if they weren't already. Hermione stood next to a shelf of books watching the others. "I would like to welcome Harry Potter, back to Hogwarts after so many years of absence."

Most of the room gasped at this announcement. Snape looked like someone had just run over his foot with a hippogriff. Harry took much

pleasure in that sight. He pulled the hood off his head revealing what most had wanted to see, his scar. Ginny rushed over to Harry and hugged him tightly planting a kiss on his cheek. After a few seconds she released him and hit him in the arm giving him a curt look. Harry knew she had welcomed and forgiven him all in one seamless motion. Dumbledore stood patiently waiting for people's attention to return. Once most had finished investigating Harry, Dumbledore spoke again.

"Yes, I assure you it is Mr. Potter," said Dumbledore with a smile noting the confusion on some people's faces and a loathing sneer on one particular person's face.

Samantha sat with Lily and Sirius in the living room playing a game of Wizard chess. Ron was coaching the children on moves when two cracks came from the kitchen.

"Hi Honey, we're back," called Hermione's voice.

"How did it go?" Asked Ron. "Did everyone fall over when they saw him?"

"That is putting it mildly, I'd say," replied Harry walking into the living room. "You should have seen Snape's face, it was brilliant. That was worth the trip alone."

"I bet he loved seeing you again," quipped Ron. "He thought this time it was his, but now you're here, he will never get the job." Ron smiled brightly at the images in his head.

"Ginny and Neville were very happy to see him again," added Hermione. "Ginny nearly knocked him over when she hugged him. Neville couldn't speak for at least ten minutes."

"It was nice being back," said Harry looking fondly at his daughter. "It will be quite a change for me, but it is all for the better. Samantha, could I speak to you for a minute?"

"Yes, father. What did you want to tell me," asked Samantha as they walked back into the kitchen.

“Tomorrow is your day again,” said Harry. “I want to spend one more day, just us, before the year starts. Think of what you want to do and tell me tomorrow.”

“I will, thank you Dad,” said Samantha cheerily. “I will think really hard about it.”

“Good. Now you better watch your knight, it seems like Sirius is trying to take him.”

## 5. The Sorting Of Another Potter

The next morning came early for Samantha. Harry had woken her up at daybreak. She got ready and headed downstairs to join her father. He was waiting for her at the table. Hermione was sitting with Harry discussing a few things. Harry turned towards her as she approached the table.

"What have you chosen for the day?" Asked Harry.

"I just want to spend time with you today, Father," answered Samantha. "Nothing special, just us."

Harry was very happy at these words. "That sounds wonderful, Honey. Shall we go then?"

Hermione bid them good morning and walked them out of the house. When she closed the door, the Daily Prophet owl was at the window. Hermione took the paper and found a very disconcerting headline on the front page.

*"Harry Potter Sited. A source close to Hogwarts has informed the Daily Prophet that Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived, has returned to the area. Details will be reported as they come in."*

"Damn! How did they find out so quickly? Exclaimed Hermione.

"What was that, dear?" Asked a sleepy Ron.

"Look for yourself," said Hermione tossing the paper to him.

Ron scanned the page, "Bloody hell! Harry is not going to like this." Ron sighed.

Harry and Samantha wandered around the country near the Weasley home. Samantha showed him all the interesting sites including the haunted house not far from the village up the road. They had a wonderful time just talking about old times and what she could expect in the year to come. About midday, they were returning to the Weasley home. As they came to the top of the hill, Harry noticed

three people standing at the front door of the house. One of them had a camera, and the others looked like reporters.

"News travels fast I see," said Harry. He looked at Samantha and frowned. "It looks like I can't walk you back. They can't see us together here." Harry hugged his precious daughter tightly, told her he loved her, and suggested she go in the back door.

As Samantha snuck around to the back door, Harry watched from afar. Once she was inside, he disappeared.

"Oh Samantha, I am so glad you are here. They didn't see you, did they?" Questioned Hermione.

"No Mrs. Weasley," replied Samantha. "They didn't see me. I am not sure where my dad is though."

"Don't worry about him, dear. He can take care of himself," consoled Hermione. "His return was in the paper this morning. The entire wizarding world knows by now. Those vultures have been out there since nine o'clock. The children can't even leave the house. Why don't you go and join them upstairs. They were looking for you earlier."

Samantha went upstairs and found everyone in James's bedroom. It was in a shambles. Clothes all over the floor, broken toys in the corner, and a box of dungbombs sitting on the bed between Sirius and Lily.

"What are you guys doing?" Asked Samantha.

James jumped away from the window with a start, but once he saw it was Samantha he motioned for her to close the door. "We are having fun with reporters. The goal is to hit them with a dungbomb and not let them see you do it," informed James. "I have a score of five, Lily has two, and Sirius has four. It is hard without using magic."

"Well, it is a good thing that I am not restricted from using it then isn't it," asserted Samantha. She pulled out her wand and cast a levitation spell on ten of the dungbombs. She sent them out the window behind and above the reporters. Then with a flick of her wand, the pellets

flew at the small group at the front door. They let out a loud yell in protest spinning around to see where the nasty things had come from, but there was no one behind them. The kids couldn't resist the laughter and they shut the window. Hermione yelled up the stairs because of the noise, but they couldn't answer her.

When darkness fell, the reporters left deciding that eight hours undergoing constant assault from dungbombs wasn't getting them any new information. James had put up a good fight, but Samantha ended up scoring more hits on their prey by the time they ran out of ammunition.

"Well done, Samantha," said an impressed James. "I figured you for a by-the-book type like Sirius."

"I pick my fights carefully," Samantha explained. "It was a worthy cause and loads of fun."

Ron came home from work looking very tired. "You wouldn't believe how many people asked me if I had seen Harry," complained Ron. "It was a nightmare. I had to lock my office door by noon and I didn't dare answer any owls."

"Well, our day was not all pumpkin juice and chocolate frogs either," replied Hermione. "We had reporters outside all day long. They finally gave up after dark."

The kids giggled when Hermione said this. She eyed them closely, knowing that something was up, but she chose not to force the issue. She had no love lost on reporters. After dinner, everyone relaxed in the living room playing games or reading in the case of Hermione.

As Harry apparated away from his baby, he knew it was going to be a rough time until he could see her again. He appeared in an alley near Diagon Alley. He pulled his hood up and purposely walked straight to Gringotts. He entered the bank and headed to a teller station. When he approached the goblin, he set his key on the counter and asked for discretion.

The goblin barely took notice that Harry Potter stood before him. "You have business with the head goblin. Please follow me."

Harry followed the goblin through a set of doors guarded by four rather large goblins. He walked down hallways and turned corners for some time before coming to a gilded door. *Grisnak Knctur: Head Goblin* was written in gold on the door. His guide knocked once and then waited for the door to open of its own accord.

"Harry Potter to see you, Sir."

"Mr. Potter," came the response. "Show him in, Crlade."

Harry entered the room and saw a regal desk piled with folders and a fancy quill set. The old, wrinkled goblin behind the desk watched Harry with piercing eyes. He was not a being to be crossed. Harry settled into the high backed chair he was directed to.

"Mr. Potter," said Grisnak, "you have finally decided to visit us. You have many things to take care of today."

"Mr. Grisnak," Harry replied, "I merely wanted to visit my vault and withdraw some funds. I need to remain unfound for a few days."

"Mr. Potter," Grisnak continued, "You have many things that have been held in pending since your disappearance. This is a perfect time to resolve them before you go into hiding again. Much of your finances await your claim."

"Sir," Harry stuttered, "I do not know what you mean."

"Harry James Potter," Grisnak read from a roll of parchment. "Heir to the Potter Estate, heir to the Most Noble House of Black, heir of Allison Dorothy Brooks, Lord of Godric's Hollow, part-owner of Weasleys' Wizarding Wheezes, owner of vault numbers 1, 7, 43, 687, 711, and 1862. Please affix your signature, family seal, palm print, and wand signature on the aforementioned areas, please."

The goblin simply slid the parchment to Harry and waited for him to do as asked. Harry looked over the words. He knew about two of the vaults. It only made sense he was the heir of the Potter Estate. The Black Estate made sense as did the WWW ownership. The twins were Weasleys after all. Joking aside, they were honourable men. The rest didn't make sense.



“Sir,” Harry began.

“I can answer nothing until you have taken proper ownership of the listed items or estates,” Grisnak said.

Harry signed, printed, and wanded the parchment. “I do not have a family seal that I know of, Sir?”

Grisnak seemed slightly disappointed. “Surely your elf could get it for you?”

“I have no elf that I know of, Mr. Grisnak,” Harry explained.

A crack sounded and Dobby appeared next to Harry. He was bouncing on his feet erratically. He still wore two hats and a pair of socks Harry had given him.

“Harry Potter, sir,” Dobby beamed. “Dobby is here as requested, Harry Potter, sir.”

“Did I ask for you Dobby?” Harry said in surprise.

“Yes, sir, Harry Potter, sir,” Dobby said unable to contain himself. “You did, sir.”

“Dobby,” Harry began, “no more sirs and Harry Potters, please. Just call me Harry.”

Dobby seemed conflicted at the request. He hopped forward and grabbed Harry’s hand. He moved his free finger toward his other hand and a flash of light appeared on the end of it. In a quick motion, Dobby opened a small cut on Harry’s hand and a drop of blood fell from it onto Dobby’s hand which had a cut as well. Once Harry’s blood met Dobby’s, another flash appeared and encircled both of them.

Dobby was happier than Harry had ever seen him before. “I is your house elf now, Harry Potter, sir. What is your orders for Dobby, sir?”

Harry seemed to understand what had happened. Dobby had just bound himself to Harry. "You just bound yourself to me, didn't you Dobby?"

"Yes, sir, Harry Potter, sir. Dobby did just that." Dobby was all smiles and excitement.

"Fine," Harry said. "You have to explain it to Hermione when she finds out then. First off, call me Harry. Nothing more than that."

"Dobby will call you Harry Potter or Sir," Dobby said firmly. "Anything less would be an insult to the great Harry Potter."

With a groan, Harry relented. "Fine, Dobby. Now, second it seems I need my family seal. Do you know where that is Dobby?"

A crack announced Dobby's departure. Harry was surprised, but a few seconds later another crack announced his return. Only Dobby returned holding a gold miter in his hands. "Dobby brings sir's family seal."

"Thank you, Dobby," was all Harry could say. He affixed the seal to the document and it shuddered slightly. The golden glow appeared and faded quickly. Dobby seemed slightly ill for a moment, but then he became even more pleased. "What happened, Dobby?"

"Sir has gained many more properties for Dobby to clean," Dobby said with glee. "Dobby has many houses to take care of. So much work to do." The smile was eerie, but he seemed happy. Until a slight drop in his facial expression appeared.

"What is it, Dobby?" Asked a concerned Harry.

"Harry Potter has more elves," Dobby said. "Where does Dobby fall in the order, sir?"

Harry knew nothing about the other elves, nor did he care at the moment. "Dobby, you are first in the list right now. I know nothing about the rest of them."

"I believe I can answer your questions, Mr. Potter, sir," Griskak said formally.

Harry didn't know what to think when a goblin called him, sir. "You called me, sir. Why?"

"It is a proper title for you considering your holdings, sir," said Griskak. "The Potter's were a wealthy family. You still are, Mr. Potter. The Blacks were a wealthy family as well. Your wife had a moderate financial position. The Weasley business has been a very profitable business venture. Godric's Hollow gives you your title of Lord and ownership of all land within the village and the surrounding area. The vaults bring your wealth to an incredible level, sir.

"The elf situation is an interesting one, sir. You have five in total including your newly acquired one. Three are from the Potter family, and one is from the Black family. All of the elves now know of the change in ownership and have access to all homes currently under your control."

"Kreacher!" Harry snapped. He only saw red when the vile, decrepit elf appeared before him.

"You called for me, master," Kreacher said, then continued quietly, "Stupid, mudblood traitor."

Dobby was on him instantly. He thrashed Kreacher until the old elf was near death. "Dobby is sorry, sir. Dobby will punish himself when he gets home."

"No, Dobby," Harry said quickly. "You may handle this elf however you wish to. He assisted in his master's death. I have no desire to see him ever again and wish him ill tidings."

"Yes, sir," Dobby said. He grabbed Kreacher and disappeared with a flash. Harry never saw Kreacher again and never asked what happened to him.

"OK, the elves are known well enough for the time being at least," Harry said to Griskak. "The vaults are a different situation."

“Vault number 1 is just that, the first vault officially opened by a wizard,” Griskak explained vaguely. “Vault 7 is the Potter Family vault and 43 is the Black Family vault. Vault 687 is your trust fund and 711 was the vault of Sirius Black. Vault 1862 was the vault the Weasley business opened for your portion of the profits. Do you have any other questions, sir?”

“How many properties do I own?” Harry asked not really caring about the answer.

“You own nine properties outright, sir,” Griskak said. “You are the owner of twenty properties that are leased to other families. All are in the village of Godric’s Hollow.”

Harry was thinking quickly at this point. “What is my financial situation, sir?”

“You are our largest client, Mr. Potter,” Griskak said “You have a monthly income of approximately twenty-five thousand galleons.”

“How much is from the rent for the Godric Hollow homes?” Harry asked getting an idea.

“You receive a converted amount of five thousand galleons for those properties since they are all muggle tenants,” Griskak said.

“Cut their rent in half and tell them it is a permanent adjustment,” Harry said. ‘I don’t need the money and they could probably use a break in their bills.’ My daughter’s vault, 1048, I wish to add funds to it. Move all of the funds in 711 into her vault. I also wish for her to have access to the other vaults if she asks for it. Please see to it that she is notified of their existence should I die. Also, I wish that Hermione and Ronald Weasley have access to vault 1862 should I die.”

“Your wishes will be carried out, sir,” Griskak said. “Anything else, Mr. Potter?”

“I would like to withdraw some money now and thank you, sir,” Harry answered.

The rest of the week was more of the same. A crew from the Daily Prophet was setup outside, but they had come prepared for the worst. Everyone waited anxiously for the day to arrive when they would go to Kings Cross to catch the train to Hogwarts. Samantha awoke early that morning; she couldn't sleep she was so excited. She had packed her things last night and they were down stairs in her trunk. She had just kept a few things in her pack upstairs to get her through the day. She changed quietly and went down stairs to wait for everyone to wake up. She found the kitchen light on and her father sitting at the table with a large object in the chair next to him.

"Hello, honey," he said. "I am sorry I haven't been able to see you this week."

"It is ok; I know everyone is looking for you. Why did you come back now?"

"I had to wish you luck before you left," said Harry with a tear in his eye. "I won't get to see you until dinner tonight, but we couldn't talk then either. Besides, I haven't given you your present yet."

"Present, I don't need a present. I am perfectly happy right now."

"Maybe you are, but you need one of these for school," said Harry pulling the cover off of the object. A large dark colored owl with white stripes and spots was sitting in the cage sleeping. "I know you like the hawk owls, so this one is for you. Congratulations my dear."

"Oh, thank you so much Daddy," whimpered Samantha. "Does she have a name yet?"

"Of course not, that is your choice," said Harry.

The owl spun her head up and looked at Samantha. "I will name her Edrea, because she looks powerful." The owl looked at her, sort of bowed her head, and went back to sleep.

"It appears she likes her name, Honey."

"I love her, thank you again, Dad," said Samantha hugging her father.

"I must go now before anyone shows up again. Remember what we talked about. You will be just fine; I believe in you, Honey.

Harry disappeared in front of her after they finished their goodbyes. Edrea perked up at the sound of Harry leaving but quickly went back to sleep. Samantha sat at the table gazing at her owl and thinking until the others started coming down stairs.

"I see we have another passenger today," said Hermione. "What a beautiful owl. What is her name, Samantha?"

"Edrea," said Samantha. "She seemed to like it."

Within an hour, the house was in a mad rush to get ready. "We have a car arriving at nine thirty and we are running late," cried Hermione hustling the children around the house getting all their things together.

At the appointed time, Ron began taking the trunks outside to the waiting car. Hermione pushed everyone outside and into the car. Ron had shooed away the reporters with a few threats and comments he hoped the kids hadn't overheard. Once they were all in the car, they were off to Kings Cross. Hermione kept asking the driver if they were going to arrive in time. Ron repeatedly told her to leave the man alone so he could drive. A few 'discussions' later they had arrived at the station.

They loaded their belongings onto a few trolleys and pushed them inside to the platform. The large group weaved their way through the crowd. Hermione motioned them through the wall when no one was looking. Sirius had given Samantha a tutorial about how the gateway worked on the way to the station. Once through, Samantha found an old train waiting for them. Hermione hurried the kids onto the train with their stuff in tow. Once all four had put away their trunks and animals, Hermione and Ron said their goodbyes. Hugs and kisses were exchanged; even Samantha received them from the Weasleys.

The train whistle blew sounding the last call. Everyone piled onto the train again and headed for the car they had chosen. The houses grew more parse as they cruised into the countryside. A knock on the door of the car broke the conversation. Mira stood in the doorway with another girl behind her.

“Hi Mira,” said Sirius. “Had a good summer?”

“It was fine, didn’t do much,” replied Mira. “Hi Samantha.”

Samantha said hello to Mira and her friend Alexandra. After a short time, the two of them left to find more people to talk to. The train continued on as the light began to fade. Everyone was getting a little antsy. Samantha was worse than the rest of them. She couldn’t wait until they were there.

Night had mostly fallen. The stars were bright and lit the fields and the mountains in the distance. The train began to slow and everyone looked relieved to be getting off the train soon. As the train stopped with a lurch, Samantha saw a small train station out of the windows. Hogsmeade looked just like what her father had described. Their stuff was drug off the train along with the other students. A large figure at the end of the platform was calling for first years to come forward. Sirius told Samantha that she had to go too.

Samantha fought her way towards the tall man amongst the sea of little people. They looked scared of such a large person or maybe it was just being here that scared them.

“Samantha Brooks?” Asked the large man in a booming voice.

“Yes, sir,” replied Samantha.

“Well, sir I don’t know about, but Hagrid ‘ill be fine.”

“Yes, si...yes Hagrid,” stammered Samantha. She had heard the stories from her father, but Hagrid was someone to be seen to be believed.

“Everyone ‘ere, good,” said Hagrid. “Everyone follow me.” Hagrid led the group to the waters edge where small boats were waiting. “Everyone in the boats, please.”

Samantha found herself in a boat with a very small girl and two boys who were more than afraid. The boats took them across the still lake. The stars could be seen on the reflective water. They passed under a vine-covered overhang framing the castle up on a hill. Samantha

could see why the first years were introduced to Hogwarts this way. The impression it made on you was amazing. Lights were shining through the windows making the castle look almost surreal. The boats stopped at a dock below the castle and everyone climbed out of their boats. Samantha had to help a few of the smaller children to avoid anyone getting wet. They walked to the main gates following in Hagrid's shadow. He opened the front doors and led them into the entrance hall.

Hermione was standing at the head of the stairs. The group walked up the stairs to meet her.

"I am Professor Weasley." Hermione went on to explain how the points worked and other things of importance. "When you enter the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your houses." The large doors opened behind her. "Now follow me and stay in line."

The group of first years and Samantha followed Hermione into the Great Hall. The ceiling was black except for a few stars that shone brightly. Numerous candles floated above their heads lighting the hall. Four long groups of tables were arranged end to end. The other students from the train were sitting at the tables. Samantha spotted Sirius, Lily, James, and Miranda sitting at the table to the right. Most of the others were watching the head table and whispering amongst themselves. Samantha recognized Professor Dumbledore sitting in the middle of the table resting in a high-backed chair. To his right was an empty seat and then a woman with bright red hair. Continuing on there was a tall man with short curly hair followed by a dark, greasy haired man who was looking up the table. To Dumbledore's left, sat her father engrossed in a conversation with another man who was taller and a little more round. A few other teachers were chatting among themselves, but at the end of the table sat Hagrid drinking from a very large goblet.

The doors closed behind the group and Dumbledore stood with his hands raised to silence the students. "Another year begins and I trust it will be a good one. As many of you are aware, we have a new teacher for Defense Against the Dark Arts. Harry Potter will be assuming that position." Dumbledore was cut off by the collective gasps and murmurs of the students. He let the room calm down a



little before proceeding with his speech. "Now that we have that news out of the way, we will begin the sorting."

Hermione stepped forward carrying a three-legged stool and an old hat. She set the stool in front of the head table and placed the hat on it as well. She stepped back and waited. The old hat began to move and a mouth appeared above the brim.

*"Another year has come and now is when I do my thing.*

*I sort you into your houses by looking into your head.*

*I use what knowledge I have and then make my decision.*

*Of the four houses here, you will live in one.*

*Calling their members friend and maybe even family.*

*Now up you come so I may complete my task."*

The room was noisy from the children cheering. Hermione held out a scroll with writing on it. "Step forward when your name is called and take your seat." Hermione cleared her throat and began. "Brooks, Samantha."

Samantha looked at her father and then Dumbledore, and made her way forward. She sat on the stool and Hermione dropped the hat on her head.

"Brooks? I think not," said a voice in her head. "Potter suits you better, yes. Now let's see. You are strong-minded, a good heart too. But the grief you hold is for the living not the dead." The hat mumbled to its self for a few seconds. "I believe I know where you belong. Not unlike your father so it better be, 'GRYFFINDOR'!"

The hat was removed and the students clapped. The Gryffindor table cheered loudly, but the Weasleys were louder still. When Samantha took her seat next to Sirius and Lily, she looked up at the head table. Her father was clapping while holding back a smile. Dumbledore was clapping as well, but he didn't hide his smile. Samantha was very

pleased with the outcome of the sorting. She had been placed in the only house she had ever wanted.

The sorting carried on as the number of students dwindled. When Hermione finished, she took away the hat and stool. Once she was seated at the table, Dumbledore rose again causing the room to fall silent. "Enjoy," was the only word he spoke. Food appeared on the tables, every kind food imaginable. Everyone started filling his or her plates. Samantha found the food to be most satisfying. She helped herself to a little bit of everything provided. Sirius congratulated her on making it in Gryffindor once he had his fill. They continued discussing things until Dumbledore came to his feet.

"It is late and I am sure many of you can't wait until tomorrow. Off you go," finished Dumbledore.

The desserts disappeared and the students got to their feet. Samantha followed Sirius and the others out of the hall and up to the Gryffindor tower. The password to the painting was "pollywog". The group entered the common room and some went up to their rooms. The first years were still getting the tour by the prefects. Samantha felt confident that she would find her way around as she went. Dumbledore was correct, it was late. Samantha found herself quite tired after an hour or so talking with the Weasleys, Miranda, and Alexandra.

Mira showed Samantha where her bed was on the girl's side. She shared a room with Mira, Alex, and a girl named Rachel Mc Michael. They were nice enough to live with, Samantha guessed. She found that her belongings had been brought up and her clothes put away in her dresser. Edrea was in her cage watching the girls move around the room. Everyone seemed fond of Samantha's owl. She was pleasant and allowed them to pet her. Samantha found one item remaining in her trunk. It was a long box that she hadn't seen before. She opened it up and found her father's old Firebolt. A note accompanied the broom.

*My darling baby, I didn't feel Edrea was enough so I decided to slip this in your trunk while you were asleep. It may not be the fastest broom anymore, but it served me well and it shall do the same for you.*

*Good night, Honey, and I will see you tomorrow.  
Your Father*

P.S. Please destroy this note when you are finished with it.

Samantha burned the note with the flame from the candle by her bed and disposed of the ashes in a bin.

"Is that a Firebolt?" Asked Mira.

"Yes, it is," answered Samantha. "My father gave it to me as a present."

"Nice. Only a few people here have Firebolts. Most use Comets or Cleansweeps," added Mira. "Are you planning to tryout for Quidditch?"

"I thought about it," said Samantha. "I hope to make Seeker, honestly."

"Really?" Alex asked. "We need a good one. I would love to see a girl be Seeker. It has been awhile since we had a female Seeker for Gryffindor."

"Well, I will do my best," said Samantha. "I only hope I am good enough. I have never played on a team before." The others had a shocked look on their faces. "Salem didn't have Quidditch. It would have been too public, but I have played with my father a few times. He seems to think I am good enough to tryout."

"Well, I hope you are," said Alex. "I am tired of being the only girl on the team."

"She is a chaser," said Mira. "And one of the best in Hogwarts."

"Stop it, Mira," scolded Alex. "You are talking me up too much. I am good enough to keep my spot on the team."

The girls got ready for bed and the lights were put out. Samantha lay in bed thinking about the future and especially tomorrow. A new school, new teachers, and new rules, hoping things will work out. 'It

will be fine,' a voice told her. 'You will succeed, I have no doubt.' This was a comforting feeling and Samantha fell asleep.

## 6. First Day of Classes

The morning came with bright sunlight covering the grounds. Samantha awoke to Edrea in her cage scratching around. The other girl were up and moving about getting ready to go down for breakfast.

“Good morning, Samantha,” said Mira. “We will wait for you in the common room, OK?”

“Sounds good,” Samantha said getting out of bed. “I will be there in a few minutes. “ A few minutes later, Samantha, walked into the common room noticing Sirius, Mira, and Alex talking.

“Morning,” said Sirius. “Sleep well?”

“Yes, I did,” replied Samantha.

The four of them went downstairs for some breakfast. When they reached the entrance to the Great Hall, they were met by a group of three boys. All of them had the Slytherin crest on their uniforms.

“Better people first,” said the leader of the group.

“Bugger off, twit,” said Sirius with a scowl. “You wouldn’t want to soil your uniform on the first day now would you?”

“Beg your pardon, Weasley,” replied the arrogant boy.

“Just get out of the way, Dominic,” said Mira with impatience in her voice.

“I think not,” said Dominic. “You all know Slytherins are better than Gryffindors, especially ones who are Weasleys. At least your parents knew when to stop having kids before they went broke,” said Dominic looking right at Sirius.

“Excuse me, but I would like some breakfast before classes begin,” stated Samantha as she pushed past Dominic and his cronies.

Dominic grabbed her arm as she passed. “And who are you, a throw away from another school? Couldn’t cut it there so you thought

Hogwarts would be easier?" The oafs behind him got a laugh out of the statement.

Samantha pulled his hand away from her, and stared him straight in the eyes. She did not like being handled, least of all by a vile, nothing of a boy. "I am Samantha Brooks and I am not a throw away from anywhere," she said keeping her voice steady. "I suggest you keep your comments to yourself if you haven't anything nice to say." Samantha continued into the Great Hall with Mira and Alex following her. Sirius stood his ground.

Dominic looked at her not believing what he had just heard. "You think I am going to listen to someone like you," he called after the girls. "We will see how this one ends."

"Shut it, Malfoy," said Sirius not able to contain his anger. "You had better watch yourself this year." Sirius caught up to the girls muttering under his breath.

Malfoy and his crew went over to the Slytherin table having a good laugh at what just took place. They spent breakfast taunting Sirius from across the room.

"Sirius, let it go," said Samantha. "They aren't worth the trouble. They will get theirs in due time. Those kinds of people always do."

"Easy for you to say," Sirius said. "You just met them. They get worse as time goes on, and you picked the worst one of them all. Malfoy never lets up."

"Malfoy doesn't concern me," said Samantha wiping the encounter aside. "I am more worried about my classes than him."

As they were eating toast and a bit of bacon, Professor Weasley handed out the schedules to the Gryffindors. Samantha had Herbology first, followed by double Defense Against the Dark Arts. In the afternoon she had Potions and Care of Magical creatures. Tomorrow her day started off with History of Magic followed by double Charms. Then the afternoon held Transfiguration and Astronomy at night. "Well, at least my schedule isn't all bad."

“Hey we have the same schedule,” said Sirius. “It will make the time go by faster. I am looking forward to Defense Against the Dark Arts myself. I can’t wait to see what Professor Potter has planned.”

Sirius wasn’t the only one looking forward to Harry’s class. More than half the school seemed to be talking about it. The rumors ranged from battling mountain trolls to werewolves and everything in between. The girls in Gryffindor seemed to be interested in Harry’s class, but not because of what they could learn. Samantha suffered through more than a few overheard comments relating to how good he looks or how brave he must be. She was not at all enjoying the tenor of those conversations.

Samantha, Sirius, Alex, Mira and many other Gryffindors found themselves in the greenhouse along with members of Hufflepuff. Everyone was still discussing what Defense would be like with such an experienced person teaching it. The chatter was broken by a voice from the front of the greenhouse.

“Good morning class, I am Professor Longbottom.” The class consisted mostly of review from last year. Samantha spent part of the class speaking with Professor Longbottom showing what she knew. He was more than satisfied with her standing. Salem had a pretty solid Herbology curriculum. No one made any glaring mistakes and the hour went by quickly.

The walk to Defense class was swift. No one wanted to be late. The class was taking place on the lower level of the castle in one of the large lecture rooms that went unused most of the time. Samantha found a seat with her group near the middle of the right side of the room. The front rows were already taken by others who had walked faster to get a good seat.

“So, I wonder which house we are paired with for this class,” said Mira getting her answer as soon as she finished the question.

A large group of Slytherins walked in and took their seats. They spotted Sirius and his friends and continued their taunts from breakfast. Mira and Samantha did their best to help Sirius ignore the insults, but right when he was about to do something rash Professor Potter entered the room.

The room fell silent except for a few coughs and the occasional giggle or two. Every one of Harry's movements was followed by dozens of eyes. Harry began taking roll. Some students' excitement got the best of them and they spilled their books, quills, or stumbled when they announced their presence. Harry paused on Dominic's name, but continued trying to avoid notice.

"Good morning class," said Harry. "I understand that your previous teacher showed you the various dark creatures that you might happen across as well as a few jinxes and curses. If any of you have bothered to read ahead, you would know that we will be concentrating on practical Defense spells and their counters. I expect everyone to read one chapter a week, prior to coming to class. I will rarely assign papers, because I never really liked them when I was in school and I learned even less."

The class seemed to perk up when they heard that little writing would be required and minimal reading. Harry continued, "I expect everyone at the end of the year to be able to pass O.W.L level tests with no less than an 'A' and I would hope that you would achieve an 'E' or higher.

"But, Professor, O.W.L.s aren't until next year," said Malfoy with sarcasm in his voice.

"I know this, Malfoy is it?" Said Harry like a late birthday present had just arrived. Malfoy nodded. "Having been here before and taken the O.W.L.s, I believe I know when they are scheduled. Cheekiness and trying to be smart will get you nowhere in my class." The Gryffindors relished at the sight of Malfoy being taken down a notch. "Today will consist of a review of your skills or lack there of. One by one everyone will move forward and attempt to disarm me with the Expelliarmus charm. I will be looking for speed and mastery of the spell and points will be awarded accordingly."

"Well, he isn't wasting any time now is he," said Sirius as Slytherin after Slytherin attempted but failed to move Harry's wand at all.

"Mr. Malfoy, you're next," said Harry.



“Expelliarmus!” Shouted Malfoy but nothing happened causing Harry to smile. “Serpensortia!” yelled Malfoy smiling as if he had just won the house cup.

There were gasps and screams from the students. Most Slytherins basked in their apparent victory over the one who defeated the Dark Lord. Harry stepped forward wearing an even bigger smile. He told the snake to calm down and go to sleep, but that is not what the class heard. All they heard was Harry speaking in Parseltongue. The serpent curled up into a ball and went to sleep. Not a sound could be heard in the room. Malfoy looked as sick as one could without retching.

“I never asked to see you produce a snake, Mr. Malfoy,” said Harry without changing the pitch of his voice. “Evanesco.” And the snake disappeared with a puff of smoke. “That will be ten points from Slytherin for a poor choice words by Mr. Malfoy.”

Malfoy sank into his chair daring not to say another word. The process continued on into the Gryffindors. Mira tried, but fared no better than anyone else. Alex had problems with her wand movement, which Harry corrected as he had for others, but she still couldn't move his wand.

“Ms. Brooks, you're next,” said Harry.

Samantha walked forward and faced her father. They had practiced this spell since she first held a wand. “Expelliarmus,” she cried. Harry's wand flew into the air in the direction of Samantha.

“Accio wand,” said Harry before his wand had reached its destination. The class was beside itself. The new girl had just disarmed one of the most famous wizards of their age. “Well done, Ms. Brooks. Ten points to Gryffindor.”

Samantha went back to her seat passing Sirius on his way up. “Well done, Samantha,” said Sirius knowing he had a tough act to follow.

“Expelliarmus!” yelled Sirius. Harry's wand almost slid out of his hand.

“Well done, Mr. Weasley,” Harry congratulated. “I see you have some of your parent’s ability. Five points to Gryffindor.”

By the time everyone had their turn at disarming Harry, the class was almost up. “I believe that is enough for one day,” Harry said dismissing class a little early. “I expect you all to read Chapter One for next time and practice disarming when you can. The hallways are not acceptable locations to practice, so I don’t want to hear about anyone blaming me if they get caught practicing where they shouldn’t. I am well acquainted with the art of avoiding teachers when doing things I am not supposed to and so should all of you.”

All of the Gryffindors were talking amongst themselves with a lot of excitement.

“That was cool,” said one student. “I can’t believe I am being taught by Harry Potter,” said another.

“I have a lot to learn,” said Mira feeling behind already. Her attempt was less than ideal. “How did you do that, Samantha?”

“Well,” Samantha began. “My father has always been a little paranoid about defense. So, he has spent a lot of time teaching me. I can help you if you want?” Sirius gave Samantha a little wink knowing that her father was anything but paranoid.

“Would you?” Mira exclaimed. “Thank you so much. I really want to do well in this class.”

“Not a problem,” Samantha answered. Alex showed interest in tutoring as well. “Sirius, would you like to join our study group, too?”

“I guess I could use the added practice,” he said trying to seem important. “Professor Potter is a much harder adversary than what I am used to. My uncles are good, but they aren’t much of a match compared to my mum.”

The students filed out of the classroom, many headed for the Great Hall for lunch. Some students hadn’t believed Harry was a Parseltongue. They thought that was just a myth or rumor. “I didn’t

think it was true,” a boy said. “At least we don’t have to worry about that happening again,” a girl said. “I hate snakes.”

After lunch, the foursome headed down into the dungeons for Potions. The dankness of the corridors added to the already tense atmosphere. Samantha sat next to Sirius and Mira with Alex filling out the table near the back of the classroom.

“Snape hates Gryffindors,” Sirius explained. “It is best to keep your head down and try and finish the potions without drawing attention to yourself. Otherwise, Snape will make your life difficult just for entertainment.”

“I hope I can manage that,” Samantha said wishing it were an hour later. She had heard stories about this class and teacher, none of them good.

They had class with Slytherin again. Malfoy still hadn’t recovered from his dressing down in Defense though he put up a good face. The door to the classroom slammed open as Snape swooped to the front of the class. He peered down at the students over his pointy nose.

“There will be no foolish wand waving in my class,” Snape said with authority. “I have no patience for stupidity or mistakes in this class. I will know quickly if you are going to be a problem here and I will deal with you accordingly.” Snape took attendance silently knowing everyone already. He paused and looked at Samantha. “Mr. Brooks, you are a transfer student I believe. From where?”

“Salem, Professor Snape,” replied Samantha keeping her response short and to the point.

“Salem, a fine school for Potions,” Snape continued. “Are you sure you belong in Gryffindor?”

“It is where I was assigned, Sir.”

“It is,” said Snape not removing his gaze. “Well, we will see just how much you learned at Salem.” Snape hung onto his last word. He

proceeded to give the students the instructions for the day's assignment. "I expect you to finish this before time is up, now begin."

The class started measuring and weighing out ingredients. Samantha had always done quite well at Potions. It was something her mother had been very good at. Sirius was having problems adding the eye of newt to his mixture. Samantha helped him earning the attention of Snape who spent the rest of class standing behind their table.

"Time is nearly up," called Snape. "Who has completed the task?" Half of the class raised their hands. "Well, I see some of you will be using the full period. Those who are finished may bring up a sample for grading. Ten minutes remain for those of you who are not finished."

When Samantha handed over her vial, Snape examined it intently. "Ms. Brooks, it seems my faith in Salem is not misplaced."

"Thank you, Professor," Samantha replied.

"In the future, work in this class is individual not group. I trust you will remember that fact."

"Yes, Professor. I will."

The group gathered their things at the end of class and proceeded outside to their next class, Care of Magical Creatures.

"Samantha, are there any subjects you aren't good at?" Alex asked.

"Well, I am terrible at History and I have never had Care of Magical Creatures before," said Samantha. "My mother was very skilled in Potions so that is where I get that from."

"Really?" Said Mira. "Where are your parents now?"

"My father is busy with work and my mother is no longer with us," Samantha said quietly.

"I am sorry to hear that," Mira apologized. "I didn't know."

"It's OK," replied Samantha. "She died when I was very young. I really don't remember her much." The somber mood remained until the start of Magical Creatures.

"Good afternoon class," said Hagrid. "I'd like to see what you remember from last 'ear."

All-in-all Samantha did rather well during the review class. Sirius and Mira helped her with some identifications and questions on proper care, but this was by far her worst subject yet.

"You did pretty well," Sirius told her on the way back to the common room. "But you could use a little brushing up."

"I know I will have to put extra effort towards that subject," Samantha said. "When do you guys want to practice Defense?"

"Anytime you have free will work for us," the trio said. "And in return we can help you when you need it."

"Sounds like we have a deal, then," Samantha told them.

The common room was a little busy. A few second years were working on their History homework and a group of fifth years were debating how well they did in Defense. "I almost hit him with that jinx," said a tall boy with an oval shaped head. "Sure you did, and then you sprouted branches," quipped his friend to laughs from those standing nearby. "Better than you did. At least I didn't fall down," retorted the second boy. "I'll have you know that Professor Potter knocked me down with a repelling charm, I think."

"If Dad hit him with a repelling charm, he would know it," Samantha added under her breath so only Sirius could hear.

"Been on the receiving end of that one, have you?" Questioned Sirius.

"You don't forget that one very quickly," Samantha replied rubbing her left shoulder. "I wish he had spent some time learning medicine. I can still remember him separating my shoulder when I was nine. I got him with a nice Conjectivitus charm, but it threw off his aim and he hit me

more squarely than he had wanted. I got presents for a week off that incident. He was so sorry,” finished Samantha with a smile.

Sirius didn't know what to say in response to hearing this. “Uh, well, I will remember not to make him mad at me then.”

“Oh, don't worry,” Samantha interjected. “He is really nice as long as you aren't hurting someone he cares about.”

“Are we interrupting something?” Mira said casually as she and Alex joined them. “Would you two like to be left alone?”

“There is nothing going on, Mira,” snapped Sirius blushing a little. “We were just talking about classes today, that is all.”

Mira looked sideways at Sirius being very obvious about the fact that she didn't believe him. “Me thinks he doth protest too much.” Not missing a beat, she continued. “If you have time Samantha, Alex and I heard some others talking about a spare classroom they had found on the second floor. Would you mind showing us how to disarm someone?”

Samantha smiled at Sirius's discomfort, “Of course I will, Mira. I have time right now if you want.”

The four of them left the common room and headed down to the second floor classroom that Mira had found. It was a long room that was wide enough for around five sets of people to practice disarming. A pair of Ravenclaws were near the windows rubbing their hands.

“Having any luck, Marie?” Asked Alex.

“Some, but we keep hurting our hands instead of pulling the wands,” said Marie.

“You are fixating on the wand too much,” Samantha explained. “If you only see the wand and their hand when you cast the spell, then you end up pulling on their hand as well. It is normal until you relax and just let the spell do the work for you.”

“Well, that is a start,” said Sirius. “Why don’t you show us what you mean.”

“Thank you for volunteering, Sirius,” Samantha said with an evil grin. She proceeded to demonstrate the spell on Sirius causing his wand to fly at her feet every time. “Now, just say the words and get the movement down. Don’t force the spell.” After twenty minutes or so, everyone was able to disarm their opponent. Even Sirius succeeded in disarming Samantha half the time.

“Good, that is more like it. Would you like to try the blocking spell?” Samantha asked the group.

“Sure would,” said Sirius. “I have a feeling some of the Slytherins will be using the disarming spell on us whenever they get a chance.”

“OK, you rotate your wand down and to your body,” she demonstrated. “Then you say Protego, and a shield is formed that will protect you from most basic spells and hexes.”

They practiced the spell for a little while. Then Samantha had them try to defend the disarming spell. After a few turns, everyone had the spells down.

“Everyone had enough for the day?” Samantha asked.

“I think we are good,” Marie said thanking Samantha and they headed back to their common room.

“That was wonderful, Samantha,” said a delighted Mira. “I think learned more today than I had all last year. My parents will be so proud. How long have you known how to do these spells?”

“My father taught me when I turned six,” Samantha explained to shocked faces. “What? He wanted me to be able to defend myself should I need too.”

“We don’t get wands until we start school,” Mira said still surprised.

“Seems pretty stupid to me,” Samantha replied. “If you learn early, you can work on stronger spells sooner.”

“How high of spells do you know?” Asked Sirius.

“I don’t know,” Samantha said. “Have you learned the Patronus spell yet?”

“Ah, no,” Sirius said quietly. “That isn’t normally taught at Hogwarts.”

“Oh, well I know that one and others so don’t make me angry,” Samantha said with a devilish glint to her eyes and a bright smile on her mouth.

They decided to eat an early dinner so they would have more time to finish their Potion’s homework. While Samantha and Mira worked on their Potion’s paper, Sirius and another boy named Mark Johnson posted something on the board.

“Sirius, what’s that?” Inquired Samantha.

“Notice of quidditch tryouts on Saturday,” he answered. “You are going to tryout aren’t you?”

“I was planning on it. I am hoping for Seeker.”

“I expect you to give it all you can. Don’t let me down,” directed Sirius.

Samantha went to sleep that night feeling energized and like she finally belonged somewhere. She looked forward to another day and more importantly the weekend. She had something to prove; she had to make her father proud of her.



## 7. The Flight of Another Potter

The second day of classes went OK for Samantha. Her day started with History of Magic, but as Mira put it, "There is no class more boring." Professor Binns, the only ghost teacher at Hogwarts, taught the class. It was a study in boredom and your ability to resist sleep. Double Charms followed History and Samantha found Professor Weasley to be much more interesting and lively, not that it was very difficult. They spent the double period charming extra chairs to fight each other and race around the room. The final half hour contained a battle royal where the last chair standing earned ten points for its master's house. Samantha and a Hufflepuff boy were the only one remaining as the class neared its end. The two conspired together and had their chairs run full speed at each other crashing into dozens of pieces. Professor Weasley ruled the contest a tie since neither chair remained intact and awarded ten points to both of them.

"Don't tell me your father is a pro at Charms," said Mira as they walked to get some lunch.

"No, my mother was the Charms expert, or so I am told," answered Samantha.

After lunch, they had Transfigurations. No one acted up in Hermione's class. She was strict and didn't tolerate horseplay.

She had a complicated transfiguration spell for them to work in class. They had to turn their white mouse into a miniature pony. Extra marks were given for bridles and ornate saddles. Sirius had no trouble accomplishing the task. He assisted Mira with her saddle adding a feathery liner. Samantha had trouble with her mouse. She could get either the front or rear of the pony to appear but not both. Sirius helped her with it, but the best they could do was just getting a pony with no extras.

"Finally, a subject where I can help you," Sirius said with confidence. "At least I am better than you at something."

"No worries here," Samantha admitted. "As far as I know, my parents weren't any better than me in this class. Any help you can give will be needed."

"A nice improvement, Ms. Brooks," said Professor Weasley. "You pass the assignment, but I suggest more practice. Forty minutes for one plain pony won't help you much in the world."

"I have already offered Samantha, my help, Professor," said Sirius.

"Well then, I wish you luck in your endeavor," said Hermione as she strolled on to the next table.

"What is it like, being taught by your mum, Sirius? Asked Alex.

"Well, you just do the best you can and never get out of line," Sirius answered. "James hasn't learned that one yet, but there is still hope."

Alex and Mira laughed, but Samantha did her best to match their amusement. She knew exactly what it felt like to learn from her father in front of others even though she couldn't tell anyone.

Later that night, the students went up to the tallest tower for Astronomy class. Samantha wasn't as good at this subject as she was at Care of Magical Creatures. She was glad when class was over and they could go back to their common rooms.

The rest of the week was more of the same. Aside from those Samantha had taught the Protego spell to, everyone had failed miserably in Defense. No one could block Harry's jinxes very well causing many students to be put in a quite room while the effects of his Rictusempra charm wore off. Snape found nothing wrong with Samantha's antidote to his aging draught. Earning her a pass on the written assignment many others found themselves working on.

Samantha awoke on Saturday morning. The weather outside was overcast but still it was decent weather for tryouts. After a late breakfast, the members of the quidditch team and the hopefuls walked down to the pitch. Lily and Samantha walked together talking about the last week. Lily had a great showing in Defense class landing a bat-boogey hex on Harry, while he was blocking her Expelliarmus charm.

"I knew I couldn't disarm him, so I used the hex my aunt taught me," said Lily pleased with herself.

“Way to go, Lily,” said Samantha.

The Gryffindor quidditch team gathered in the middle of the pitch discussing the schedule for the day. They decided to start with the open chaser position. Lily was the first one chosen to fly. She flew up in the air on her Cleansweep 580. She flew in formation with the team passing the quaffle to the other chasers heading for the goal posts. The beaters, Sirius and Mark Johnson handled blocking for tryouts since they were without a keeper.

A few spectators came out to watch tryouts. Harry, Hermione, and Ginny sat in one of the boxes watching the players fly to and fro.

“I don’t know why I put myself through this,” Hermione said half covering her face with her hands. “If I had my way, they never would have gotten on a broom until they got here. But oh no, Ronald had them flying around since they were four. I swear if Lily gets hurt I will never forgive him.”

“Hermione, calm down,” Harry told her. “Lily is doing just fine. I see she has had a good teacher. She is amazing with those passes. I have not seen moves like that since...” Harry received a glaring look from Ginny as if to shut him up before he said too much.

“Since when?” Hermione asked, her face half buried in her arm. “Since when!”

“Since, I was in school,” Harry said covering as well as he could with Hermione asking the questions.

“Ginny, do you know what he is talking about?” Hermione asked presuming the answer.

“Ah, nope. Not a clue, Hermione,” answered Ginny knowing she was found out.

Trying to salvage what he could, Harry pointed out that they were back on the ground. Hermione’s attention shifted to the field making sure her baby was all in one piece.

“Good, now we are on to keepers,” Harry said. There were a few that couldn’t manage to save even the slowest shots, but one had the skills necessary to make the cut.

Lily came bounding up the stairs to the box. “I made it, I made it,” she cried nearly in tears. “I am their new chaser.”

“Congratulations, my dear,” said Hermione making sure there weren’t any other students around. “I am proud of you, and your father will so excited to hear the news.”

“Thank you, mum,” said Lily still beaming. “And thank you aunt Ginny, I really appreciate your help.”

Ginny’s smile fell as Hermione’s eyes burned holes into Ginny’s back. “Ginny! You have some explaining to do,” Hermione said sternly. “Don’t walk away from me, this isn’t over yet!”

Ginny hastily bid Harry a good day and hurried Lily down the stairs out of earshot. Harry couldn’t help but laugh at the situation. “Well look at it this way, Hermione,” Harry began. “It isn’t the only thing Lily learned from Ginny.”

“What do you mean,” Hermione said still red from the last realization.

“A... well, maybe I shouldn’t,” Harry stammered but Hermione fingered her wand forcing Harry to finish his sentence or risk punishment. “Well, Lily landed a very nice bat-boogey hex on me this week and only Ginny could have taught her that one so well.”

“Now I have two bones to pick with that relative,” said Hermione determinedly.

“Samantha’s turn,” said Harry.

Samantha mounted her Firebolt and shot into the air making one pass around the pitch. Mark Johnson, the team captain, released the snitch and Samantha took off towards the dull golden orb. Without the sun, it was going to be harder to find the snitch. She lost site of it around the far goal posts. Scanning feverously, Samantha spotted something flitting around midfield near one of the towers. She

descended thirty feet and headed right for the object. It tried to double back and barrel roll out of reach, but Samantha wasn't going to lose it. She pursued it to their goal posts and stretching out her hand snagged it out of the air. Only Harry had been able to follow her movements. Most of the team just stood where they were impressed by her speed and skill on her broom.

Samantha flew over to the rest of the team landing lightly in front of them still holding the snitch tightly in her hand. "Well, what do you think?" She asked hoping for a hint at their decision.

"I will have to talk it over with the rest of my team," said Mark. The conference took only a few seconds and their verdict was in. "You are our new seeker. Congratulations."

"I made it, thank you," cried Samantha.

"If you keep that up, we'll win the cup for sure," said Sirius. "You didn't disappoint at all."

"Well done," said a voice from behind the team. The group parted to get a look at the speaker. "Very impressive, all of you," said Harry. "Now you had better win that cup this year." Harry smiled and turned on his heels and headed back up to the castle joining Hermione trying to keep her from yelling at Ginny more than she already had.

"Harry Potter watched our practice? This just keeps getting better," said a very proud Mark Johnson. "You don't want to let Professor Potter down, now do you?"

The team replied with an emphatic 'No'. The equipment was gathered up and stowed in a trunk. Mark and Brian Miller, another chaser, carried the trunk while talking to the rest of the team. Sirius hung back with Samantha.

"You were great, Samantha," said Sirius. "That was a great bit of flying you did. I have never seen moves like that at Hogwarts. You really are your father's daughter," finished Sirius lowering his voice.

“Thank you,” said Samantha. “I never knew how well I would do with other people around. I have only ever played with my dad and a few improvised bludgers. I am glad I made the team.”

News of the tryouts spread quickly and Samantha found herself beseeched with well-wishers from Gryffindor and the few acquaintances of Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw she had made in the last week. Dinner went quickly as everyone talked of their impending victories in quidditch. It was a joyous meal and even Slytherin insults couldn't dampen the mood.

Samantha left the Great Hall with Sirius and they walked around the castle talking about moves and turns she should practice. As they passed an empty classroom, Samantha noticed her father waiting inside. “Sirius, could you give me a minute?” She asked.

“Sure, no problem,” replied Sirius.

Samantha entered the room closing the door behind her. Harry looked up from his book. He smiled only as a proud father could and stepped forward embracing his daughter. “Well done, Honey. Well done. I am so proud of you I just don't know what to do with myself.”

“Thank you, Dad,” said Samantha fighting back tears of joy. “I am only as good as you made me.”

“Oh, I dare say you have your own abilities. You proved that today. So, how did your week go?”

“It went well,” said Samantha thinking back. “I am not very good at History or Transfiguration, and I need Sirius and Mira's help in Care of Magical Creatures. But my friends help me where I need it and I do the same for them.”

“That makes me happy to hear. What about Potions? Is Snape giving you a hard time?”

“Not really, nothing worse than anyone else. I am good enough at Potions that he leaves me alone most of the time.”

“Wonderful, Honey. I am so proud of the strength you are showing. Your mother would be thrilled.”

“I know she would.”

“Well, I think I have taken enough of your time,” Harry said reluctantly. “On you go now. Sleep well, Honey.”

“I will, miss you.”

“Miss you too,” Harry said as he watched his daughter open the door and leave.

“What did you say to him?” Asked Sirius.

“He just congratulated me on making the team,” Samantha said rubbing her locket while deep in thought.

As she was lying in bed waiting to fall asleep, she was staring at her mother’s face. She was looking at her open locket thinking of what she would say if her mother was here. After a few minutes, Mira asked her what she doing.

“Nothing,” Samantha said closing her locket. “Just thinking, that is all.”

“OK, goodnight then,” said Mira extinguishing the lit candles.

The room fell into darkness and Samantha could hear her own heart beating. It had been a wonderful day. She made the team and her father was very proud of her.

Sunday was mostly spent completing the prior week’s homework. Sirius and the others helped Samantha with her weaker subjects when she needed it. Likewise, Samantha returned the favor. The quidditch team had a meeting on Sunday so everyone could get to know each other and they could figure out a practice schedule and plays.

“We need some really good plays if we want to beat Slytherin this year,” coached Mark. “We don’t want to be embarrassed during the finals like last year again.”

“Mark, that is unfair,” snapped Brian Miller. “They took out our keeper twelve minutes in. What could we do about it?”

“Obviously, more than we did,” was all Mark could say.

The meeting lasted for about an hour and four new plays were drawn up. They also decided on having practice every Wednesday and Saturday until they got closer to their first match. After the team disbanded, Mira joined the three of them sitting around the fire half-heartedly working on a Transfiguration paper. The night passed uneventfully and everyone made it to bed early.

Samantha found her sleep slightly troubled. She kept finding herself feeling alone in her dreams. This was very unusual for her. She had never had dreams like this before. She awoke several times almost in a fright. She would scan the room seeing three other people in their beds and Edrea sitting calmly on her perch next to Samantha’s bed.



## 8. Match vs. Slytherin

The next month or so flew by faster than any before. The temperature at night had dropped many degrees, but the days were still warm enough to forego an overcoat. Samantha was still the best at Defense. They had completed the basic spells and had moved on to intermediate ones. Samantha was able to block nearly all of Harry's attempts to land the Impedimenta spell. Only those students whom she helped could stop more than half of them. Potions continued as it had started. Samantha was good enough and didn't scare easily enough to cause Snape to punish her more than any of his own Slytherins. Charms came easier to Samantha than the others. She found herself spending almost as much time assisting her friends in this subject as she did with Defense.

With Sirius's instruction, Samantha improved in Transfiguration, but she was never as good as he. History was exactly the same as it had been for years. Boring and just something everyone suffered through. Mira helped Samantha remember names and dates while they studied together. Quidditch practice went really well. They had grown their play list to twelve separate plays. Practices happened four nights a week and they were looking really good. Mark had spied on a few practices of the other teams and he was of the opinion Gryffindor was the best. 'We actually play as a team,' he would say when he returned from a mission across the lines. Everyone was confident on their chances Saturday. They played Slytherin in the first match of the season.

The week preceding the match was very stressful for the team. They trained all week leading up to the match. Samantha had trouble sleeping the night before the game. She kept tossing and turning unable to relax enough to fall asleep. The plays ran through her head. She ran interference when they made a push to score and didn't have the snitch in sight. After an hour of battling nerves, she finally just opened her eyes and stared at the ceiling. This was stupid, she thought to herself. I am being silly. Just go to sleep. Thinking about it isn't going to change anything.

A voice crept into her mind, 'it is OK. Just close your eyes and empty your mind. Sleep will follow.'

Samantha found herself relaxed after this and drifted off to sleep. The next morning she was sitting at the table pushing her food around the plate not unlike the rest of the team. They all had issues getting the food from their plate to their mouths.

“Well no point in sitting around any longer,” said Mark standing up. “Let’s go team.”

The group walked down to the pitch and looked over the field. It was bathed in sunlight and the fallen dew, remaining on the grass, glistened. They went into the changing rooms and got into their quidditch robes. Mark led them in a refresher course of the plays they all knew by heart. The team humored him not wanting to be left alone in their own thoughts. The crowd was growing outside and the collective could be heard talking and chanting.

Ginny Weasley entered the tent, “Time to head out.”

The Gryffindors lined up and mounted their brooms. On the whistle, the door raised and they flew out into sunlight in formation. They flew around the arena twice showing some precision flying. The Red and Gold side cheered as loudly as they could. Many Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs cheered as well. There was no love lost on the Slytherins when they took the field. Only the Green and Silver end cheered for their flyby.

Samantha noticed Malfoy even with her. He had made the team this year as well filling their open seeker position, but the rumor had it he wasn’t very good.

“We aren’t in Defense class any more, Brooks,” said Malfoy snidely.

“How observant you are, Malfoy,” replied Samantha as brightly as she could to hide her sarcasm. “Would you like me to tell you when we begin or can you figure that out for yourself?”

“Watch your back, girl,” Malfoy said not hiding his disdain.

Professor Weasley gave the rules and released the bludgers. The snitch followed circling centerfield before it shot off away from

anybody. Samantha lost sight of it when a Slytherin blocked her view. On the whistle, the quaffle was released and the game began.

“And they’re off,” shouted a sixth year, Ravenclaw girl who did the announcing. “Gryffindor has possession, Willows to Miller, Miller moving past the three Slytherin chasers. Miller to Weasley, Weasley past Chase, SCORE! Ten points to Gryffindor. That was a great goal by the youngest member on the team. Slytherin moves up the field. Rand to Redilson, Redilson back to Rand, Rand to Dennison. Oh, that was a close shot by Weasley. Bludger nearly unseated Dennison. Gryffindor has possession. Weasley to Willows. Brooks from nowhere flew through the Slytherin defense and allowed Willows a clear shot on goal. SCORE! Another ten points to Gryffindor.”

Samantha resumed her position above the action constantly searching for the snitch. “Think that was cute, Brooks,” called a voice belonging only to Malfoy.

“Effective is more like it, Malfoy,” said Samantha still searching for the golden orb.

The action had gotten more desperate below. Watson and Stupinski had taken to hitting bludgers at any Gryffindors who tried to enter their area. They were aiming for people’s heads. Professor Weasley warned them after the second close call nearly beamed Mark Johnson.

“Come on Hermione, just watch the match,” said Harry sitting in the top box along with Dumbledore, Ron and Arthur Weasley, and Neville.

“I can’t,” cried Hermione too afraid to watch. “I never liked watching you and Ron play either.”

“But you did and your son and daughter deserve that much don’t they?” Harry questioned.

“Of course they do,” Hermione replied forcing herself to watch the action.

“SCORE! Another ten points for Gryffindor. Wait a minute, there goes Brooks. She is heading towards the ground. Has she spotted the

snitch? And Malfoy hot on her heels. A sharp left, she is pulling up. Does she have it? YES, she does. One hundred and fifty points to Gryffindor and the vict... Hey that is illegal, FOUL!"

As Samantha pulled up from her dive, the snitch firmly in her hand, she felt a sharp pain strike the back of her head and everything went dark.

Samantha was still a good twenty feet in the air when she was hit by a bludger in the back. She started to fall, but Ginny managed to cast a spell stopping her descent only two feet before she would have struck the ground. The crowd was unable to control itself at such a blatant violation of the rules.

In the top box, Harry saw the scene unfold before most others had figured it out. He shot to his feet, wand out, but Hermione managed to pull his arm down before anyone outside of the box took notice. "Harry, calm down," Hermione whispered fumbling for words. "Remember, you would only make things worse. This isn't what you want."

Ron and Arthur had worry-filled looks on their faces. They hoped Samantha was all right, but they were also worried about what Harry was going to do. Dumbledore left his seat and managed to get ahead of Harry on the way down to the field. "Harry, I think it best if you stayed on the sidelines for this," Dumbledore said as they raced down the steps. "Wouldn't you agree? You of all people know how well we take care of injuries here." Harry was pained at these words because he knew Dumbledore was correct, but he couldn't leave his baby lying unconscious on the ground. "I will take care of her. Why don't you go on up to the hospital wing and wait for us there."

Hermione grabbed Harry's arm and led him towards the castle. Harry fought his fatherly urges to run to his daughter's side. The Gryffindor team had landed and ran towards Samantha's motionless body. Ginny was examining her already for signs of broken bones or even worst injuries. Dumbledore arrived shortly there after, cast Mobilicorpus on her, and directed her levitating form towards the castle parting the throngs of people who were gathering.

Once Dumbledore had taken charge of Samantha, Ginny directed her rising rage towards Grond Stupinski who had hit the bludger at Samantha after the game had been called. He earned two weeks worth of detentions and suspension from the team for one game. The other Slytherins began to protest the harshness of the punishment, but once they saw the fire in Ginny's eyes directed at them they all fell silent. They quickly gathered up their brooms and headed off to the changing rooms with Professor Snape urging them onward.

Once discipline had been doled out on the field, Ginny led the Gryffindor team up to the castle bypassing the changing rooms altogether. The group flew up the steps to the hospital wing and not a word was spoken when they saw a motionless body resting on a bed dressed in their colors. Madam Quince was standing next to the bed waving her wand over Samantha. A faint glow could be seen coming from her damaged shoulder. Professor Dumbledore was opposite Madam Quince observing the healing process with concern.

"Wait here," Ginny told the remainder of the team. She stepped into the room and walked over to Hermione and Harry who were against the far wall at the foot of the bed. Harry didn't even acknowledge Ginny's presence and was just rubbing his forehead lightly. She spoke to Hermione for a few seconds, who was not concealing her emotions very well as faint tears fell down her cheeks, and then returned to the team. "It appears she will be fine. She has a concussion and a few broken bones in her shoulder, but Madam Quince will have her better by tomorrow afternoon."

The group of onlookers stood their ground not moving an inch. "She will be fine," Ginny told them anxiously. "Now, on with your Saturday, everyone." Ginny stepped forward motioning for the students to disperse and go about their business. The reluctance of the children to leave was evident, but they slowly turned and headed back down the hallway to the stairs.

"Professor," asked Sirius, "may we stay with her for a little while?" Alex and Lily nodded agreeing with Sirius. Mira came running up the hallway nearly knocking over a few of her retreating housemates.

"If you promise to stay quiet and out from under foot," Ginny began. "I am sure Samantha would appreciate the thought."

Sirius, Lily, Alex, and Mira entered the room as quiet as they could trying to avoid anyone's notice especially Madam Quince. Ron and Arthur Weasley were standing just inside the doorway of the hospital wing, out of sight of the doorway, quietly discussing something between them. Mira tapped Sirius on the shoulder and pointed at Ron and Arthur obviously confused by presence of the Minister of Magic.

Lily leaned her head to Mira and whispered, "My dad and grandpa wouldn't miss my first quidditch match."

Mira nodded accepting the explanation. The group moved off to the edge of the room keeping Samantha in their sight, but staying far away from the adults.

Professor Dumbledore turned and addressed Ginny. "I understand the individual has been disciplined, Professor Weasley?"

"Yes, Professor," Ginny answered. "He has been suspended for one game and he received two weeks of detentions."

"Professor Weasley," Dumbledore said to Hermione, "I believe you can empty the wing so Madam Quince may continue her work uninterrupted."

Hermione wiped away the few tears she was unable to hold back and accepted the task. She moved along the far wall telling Ron, Arthur, and Ginny to meet her in her office. She noticed the group of friends standing next the windows and told them to leave as well.

"But Professor," Alex implored. "We would very much wish to stay until she wakes up. She is our friend."

"I understand that and I know how you feel, but it is best that Samantha be left alone right now so she can rest," Hermione explained. "I have been there myself, but now is not the time. I will let you know when she can have visitors."

"We understand," Sirius said pulling his friends to the door.

They left the wing slowly merging with the adults who were leaving as well. Once out into the hallway the adults started to walk to Hermione's office.

"I hope he doesn't do anything stupid," Ron said to Arthur.

"Now is not the place to speculate," Arthur replied curtly taking notice of the children.

Ginny looked puzzled, as did Mira and Alex. The two groups parted ways when the young Gryffindors turned down their hallway to the common room.

"What do you think Mr. Weasley meant," Mira asked Sirius.

"Oh, nothing I am sure," said Sirius not wanting any more questions about it. "Let's just get started on our homework until we hear any more news."

They entered the common room in silence and only Sirius stopped to answer the questions of worried Gryffindors who were waiting for someone with information about Samantha. After everyone had their fill of good and bad news, the group of fourth year friends sat down with their work and tried to finish a history paper that was due for next class. Restless hours went by and the progress on the paper was slow. The portrait swung open and Hermione entered the common room.

"She should be awake after dinner," Hermione told the worried study group. "You might want to stop by then and see if she can have visitors." Hermione turned and left the room after saying her piece.

Dinner was very tame for a Hogwarts Sunday meal. The group ate quickly and sped up to the hospital wing. They opened the door and peered in to find Professor Potter sitting on the bed next to Samantha's. He turned at the sound of the door and rose to his feet. He walked over to them and told them they could speak with Samantha for a little bit. He left the room through the open door and closed it behind him.

"That is weird," Mira began. "Why would the Professor be here?"

"I don't know," Sirius lied. "But I don't think we should say anything about it."

The other two seemed to agree and said nothing until they made it to Samantha's bed. She was awake and smiling up at them.

"At least we won the game," Samantha said cheerfully fighting back the strong ache in her shoulder.

"That we did, you were great," said Alex smiling back at her. "How are you feeling?"

"Not bad, considering what happened," said Samantha fighting to keep a pleasant appearance.

"They letting you out of here tomorrow?" Asked Sirius.

"I guess so, but they haven't said for certain yet."

"We can't wait until you get out," said Mira fighting back a few tears.

The friends spoke for a few more minutes, but Samantha grew tired and was beginning to drift off to sleep. They got up and left not wanting to wake her.

Samantha returned to the common room late the next afternoon. She thanked her well wishers and joked with a few others, but Samantha had gathered her books and sat with her friends. They helped her with her History and Transfiguration papers while she assisted them with Defense and Charms. By the time they headed upstairs, Samantha was almost caught up on her work. She got into bed and took a drink from a flask that Madam Quince had given her. The purple fluid burned her mouth, but as it went down it felt warm and her shoulder tingled. She felt better and lied down on her soft pillow. She opened her locket and looked at her mother's picture. Allison was staring back at her with love in her eyes. Her father had a big smile on his face and was watching her too. She felt so safe and secure. The warmth of the potion made her sleepy and she drifted off to sleep without another thought.



## 9. Halloween

Samantha awoke to a shadow moving across her face. Her eyes sprung open to see Mira standing there with her mouth wide open. Mira's gaze wasn't on Samantha, but the open locket around her neck. Samantha noticed what had happened and quickly snapped the locket shut and slipped it in her nightshirt.

"Mira," Samantha said quietly and fighting the urge to run. "What did you see?"

"I saw," Mira paused not knowing what to say and stammering her words out. "I saw nothing. Just a picture of a woman and Harry Potter in your locket."

Samantha's face fell. She couldn't believe how stupid she had been, careless with her secret. All possible outcomes played through her head and none of them ended well. She scanned the room and saw no one else.

"Mira, you have to promise me that you will say nothing about this to anyone," Samantha implored her. "Do you promise me?"

Mira seemed confused and didn't know what to say. She finally nodded half-heartily.

"That isn't good enough, Mira," Samantha pressed. "This is my life we are talking about. I have to know I can trust you to tell no one about what you just saw."

Mira could see the fear and worry in her friend's eyes. She wasn't sure what the big deal was, but she did what her friend asked. "I will tell no one, Samantha. You have my word on it." Samantha seemed to relax a little, but not completely. "Who else knows about this?"

"A few people, and some teachers, but you can't say anything, please," Samantha said nearly losing her head.

"I promise you, Samantha," Mira reassured her. "I won't tell anyone, no matter what."

Samantha got dressed quickly and followed her friends down to breakfast. She wasn't going to let Mira out of her sight. She couldn't afford to, not now. She spent most of breakfast pushing her food around the plate and keeping an eye on Mira. She told her friends she was fine when they asked, but she didn't elaborate.

Herbology went slowly and Samantha wasn't really paying attention. She listened to every word Mira said to people waiting for her slip up, but she never did. Once they entered Defense, Samantha's guilt increased tenfold. She had failed her father. After he spent all Saturday night with her in the infirmary, she had failed him. She felt a familiar voice rising in her head. She was too ashamed to listen. Her eyes never left the desk. She knew she couldn't look her father in the eyes today.

Harry's gaze was on his daughter, but he could tell she wasn't happy at all. He shifted his line of sight to Mira and she quickly stared at the floor. Mira had watched Harry stare at Samantha. When she had looked up at Harry, she found he was staring at her. His gaze was too much to stand and she shifted to the floor. It wasn't until class started that Mira dared to look up. Harry had stood and was demonstrating the next set of attack and defense spells they were going to learn for the day.

Again they were using a blocking spell but the attack spell was the Repelling charm. The room was only big enough for half the class to practice repelling their partners at a time. The back of the class had mats and pillows arranged to catch the repelled students before they crashed into wall. The class took turns blocking the charm, casting it, and waiting. By the time the period ended, everyone had four chances with the spell. Samantha didn't fair as well as usual, but she was still in the top five for the class. Sirius had managed to throw her the length of the room once. He was so sorry when he had done it that he ran to help her up. He was afraid that he had hurt her so soon after her last injury.

Mira noticed Sirius hesitate the next time he was up and look at Harry before he proceeded. Mira couldn't help but think that Sirius knew as well by the way he was acting. Samantha managed to return the

favor though. Sirius flew deep into the pillows when she hit him with a superb repelling charm.

Mira grabbed her bag and made for the door with the others when Harry called her forward.

"Ms. Andrews, would you have a second please?" Harry asked.

Mira knew she was in for it. She couldn't have 'The Harry Potter' mad at her. She slowly walked to the front of the classroom with her head down. The other students had left including Samantha. Harry took out his wand and pointed it at the door and it shut tightly. Mira jumped at the sound not knowing what her fate was going to be.

"Miranda, would you mind looking at me?" Harry questioned.

Mira lifted her head and met his eyes, "Yes, Sir."

"I understand that you know something that you weren't meant to know. Am I correct in my assessment, Ms. Andrews?"

"Yes, Sir, it was accident," Mira stammered. "I just went to wake Samantha up so we could go to breakfast and I saw her locket open. I didn't mean for it to happen. Honestly, Professor, I..."

"It is alright, Miranda," Harry said softly. "Samantha trusts you to keep her identity a secret and I trust my daughter's judgment on this issue." Mira face brightened at those words. "But I must ensure that you understand the gravity of this, Miranda. You must never tell anyone who she is or her life may be in danger." Harry lowered his voice, "If Voldemort's followers found out who she is, many more lives would be in danger. Do you understand me?"

Mira shuddered at the mention of Voldemort's name. "Yes, Professor, I understand what you are saying. I will never speak of this, Sir."

"Good, I am glad that you understand and that my daughter has someone who she can trust with such information. Now, I suggest you get on to lunch and please do not treat Samantha differently than you were before. She would be most unhappy with me if you did."

The smile on Harry's face told Mira she was free leave and she hurried to the door, which flung open as she neared it. She looked over her shoulder and found Harry still smiling up at her. She ran out into the corridor and nearly ran over Samantha who was waiting for her.

"Are you OK, Mira?" Samantha asked. "He wasn't too mean was he?"

"Samantha," Mira said startled. "He was perfectly nice." Mira smiled at her friend who seemed the same but different all at once. Mira pulled Samantha to the side of the mostly deserted hallway, "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Safety was the main reason," Samantha said. "You are the first person to find out without being told."

"Is it really that dangerous, Samantha?" Mira asked knowing the answer.

Samantha nodded. "Are still going to talk to me?"

"Of course I am, don't be stupid," Mira replied. "Now let's go get some lunch."

The pair joined their friends at lunch and tried to act as normal as they could. Potions proceeded without incident other than Snape trying to foul up Sirius while he was mixing his ingredients.

"He was just trying to get back at you for what your aunt did to his precious Slytherin thug," Alex said as they left the classroom. The group agreed with her assessment of Snape's actions.

Care of Magical Creatures was not too difficult either. They were learning about nifflers and what benefits they could offer to a person who had them. Hagrid asked how Samantha was doing and told her not to worry about the incident. He assured her that at least one of Grond's detentions was going to be absolutely horrible, but he didn't elaborate on the details.

Back in the common room, the group was finishing up on their Potion essay when Ryan Stevenson, the Gryffindor keeper, came over to Sirius.

"Sirius, have you heard about what happened to Grond in Defense today?" Ryan asked fighting laughter.

"No, I haven't, what happened?"

Samantha's attention was firmly on Ryan while he explained the scene to the interested common room.

"Well, we were working on advanced hexes and how to counter them. Grond is pretty bad at most things he tries unless it involves running over people. Anyway, he cast a hex on his partner and it was blocked, but he failed to block the counter attack at all. Professor Potter wasn't satisfied with his effort so Grond had to pair up against Potter the rest of class. It was the most enjoyable class I have ever had. Most of us just watched Potter beat him down time and time again. He had to be revived from wicked stunners at least three times not to mention how many times he was thrown across the room by any number of different spells. Last I heard, he was still in the infirmary with Quince getting everything straightened out. We almost got in trouble for laughing, but I covered as best I could. If I didn't know any better, I would say Potter enjoyed showing him the meaning of true magical defense."

"I wish I had been there to watch that," Sirius said laughing at the image everyone had in his or her minds.

Samantha smiled, but she knew this might bring added attention to her father and maybe even her. Mira was laughing and winked at Samantha. After dinner the group was in the common room finishing the last of their Astronomy homework before they went to bed. Alex went up first leaving Samantha, Sirius, and Mira in the empty room sitting by the fading fire.

Samantha was the first to speak about what Mira had wanted to discuss. "Mira knows, Sirius," said Samantha.

"She knows, since when?" Sirius asked not sure what she knew.

"I know about Samantha," Mira said. "I found out this morning."

"But, no one is supposed to know," Sirius was confused.

"She knows, but she is OK with it so don't worry about it," said Samantha in a calm tone. "My dad knows about it and he is fine with it."

"Well, that is good thing," added Sirius. "He wouldn't be someone I would want to make angry, that is for sure."

"I am more pleased about it than you, Sirius," Mira said.

The first Hogsmeade visit was coming up the day of Halloween. The past couple weeks went by quickly and everyone was talking about getting away this Saturday. Plans to visit the Three Broomsticks, Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes, Honeydukes, and other places were high on the list of most students. Gryffindor had an early practice Saturday morning and they were rushing through it so they could join their friends in Hogsmeade. Sirius, Samantha, and Alex gathered Mira after practice and walked the path to Hogsmeade. They were having a good time when they came across Malfoy, Grond, and Stron on the path tormenting a few fourth years from Hufflepuff.

"It's Weasley and his groupies," chided Malfoy. "How ever do you find the time to sleep, Weasley?"

"Watch your tongue, Malfoy," said Sirius trying to keep his temper, which was rising by the second. "You would hate to get into trouble on your first Hogsmeade visit. They might not let you come back."

"Shows what you know, Weasley," Malfoy said snidely. "Do you really think I will ever get into trouble over a worthless person like you? Your mother would be madder at you if anything were to happen than she would be at me. And how is your father doing? He still dream of becoming a professional quidditch player?"

"Just leave us alone, you worthless git," said Alex chiming in.

"I see you let your women do your fighting for you, Weasley," Malfoy said noticing Sirius getting redder with every comment. "Well, at least you have both your parents unlike Brooks here."

Samantha had a flash of anger fire up inside her, but she forced it back down and leveled herself before responding. "I may only have a father, but at least he isn't a Death Eater reject like yours."

Grond and Stron couldn't believe what they had just heard even though it was a few seconds later than everyone else. They turned to Malfoy who looked as if he was ready to attack any second. Sirius and Mira were surprised by Samantha's comment but they were ready to defend their friend if things started happening.

"What did you say?" Malfoy said choosing his words carefully.

"You heard me," Samantha said staring him down. "If you need it repeated, why not ask your gargoyles. They might be able to help for once."

A teacher was walking up the path headed back to the school. Malfoy noticed this and fought back his urge to attack. He simply left saying, "This isn't over, Brooks." The three Slytherins continued on back to the castle ahead of the teacher.

"Remind me never to get into an argument with you, Samantha," Alex said shaking her head. "I didn't know you had a mean streak in you that deep."

"It is best not to insult my family, that is all," Samantha told her ending all conversation on the topic.

The first stop was Honeydukes. The group loaded up on sweets and other tasty treats fighting through the crowd of student that packed the shop. Then they went on to the Weasley's shop. Fred greeted them while George was running around helping other customers.

"What will it be today, nephew?" Fred asked.

"What is there, Uncle Fred?" Asked Sirius.

“We have a new stink bomb that can be triggered by movement,” Fred explained. “You pull the top, then you throw it or set it down, and when someone gets nearby it goes off. Really nasty and great fun if you need something stealthy. We also have a new cream that will turn you into a giant slug for an hour or so. It was inspired by our dear brother back when he was in school. Don’t tell him until he tries it first.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t tell him about it,” Sirius said remembering the story from when he was a kid. “Those stink bombs sound pretty cool.”

They each selected their favorite gags and trick candies and headed back out onto the main road. Even after the family discount, they found themselves considerably lighter in the pocket than they had expected.

“Well, Three Broomsticks for some butterbeer?” Sirius asked.

“Sounds good to me,” Alex replied.

The Three Broomsticks was busy. Kids were filling every table but the ones in the rear. Sirius stopped at the bar to purchase drinks for everyone. Samantha, Mira, and Alex found an empty table and sat down. Sirius joined them a minute later carrying mugs for all of them. They rested their feet and watched everyone else talking and moving about.

Mira broke the silence first, “What was Malfoy’s problem with you, Samantha?”

“He is probably still sour about the Quidditch match,” Samantha said not sure if that was the reason.

“You beat him fair and square,” Alex chimed in. “He just can’t get over losing to a girl. They don’t even like playing with girls. That is why Slytherin doesn’t have any on their team.”

“There is little he can do about Samantha,” Sirius added. “They are going to have to get used to losing to her. She is one of the best seekers we have had in years.”



“Now stop,” Samantha said blushing a little. “I hope am good enough to keep my position, that is all.”

Sirius laughed, as did the others. Their butterbeers slowly disappeared as the sun crept nearer to the horizon. They finished their drinks and followed the path back up to the castle. They talked about the next Quidditch match between Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff, classes, and anything else that came to mind. The path turned up hill a little slightly going past a grouping of rocks on one side and a hedgerow on the other.

Samantha stopped short putting her arms out. The others noticed this and stopped, asking her what was wrong. Samantha searched both sides of the path trying to figure out what made her feel unsafe.

“I don’t know what it is,” Samantha began. “Something just isn’t right.”

Her friends started looking around too. Trying to find anything that was out of place. After a bit, Alex and Mira shook their heads and told their friends they were just being paranoid. The others continued back to the castle with Samantha lagging behind still acutely aware of her surroundings. The bulk of the group was even with the rocks when Samantha felt a shift in her stomach.

“Get down!” Samantha screamed as spells shot from the hedgerow.

Sirius was hit by a red and purple stream of light knocking him to the ground with some force. Alex and Mira dove to either side avoiding the last bolts of light that soared over their heads. Two figures emerged from the foliage with their wands out.

Samantha dove and rolled to her right drawing her wand as her father had taught her. From a crouch, she sent a stunner at the lead attacker knocking him to the ground a few feet behind where he started. The second attacker returned the stunner, but Samantha blocked it sending the jet high into the air. Samantha’s counterattack was a bright, fast moving purple spell that struck the assailant in the chest. He fell to the ground landing on his side. The slope of the hill was steepest in this location causing the unconscious body to roll down the incline. He only stopped rolling when he struck an outcropping of rocks protruding through the grass.

Alex and Mira had joined the fight sending stunners into the bushes. Unfortunately the last two attackers had been amongst the rocks. They leapt out sending hexes at the two girls. Mira and Alex had just enough time to turn and see the hexes deflect off an invisible shield that was protecting them. Samantha lunged forward waving her wand in a difficult pattern. When she spoke two words, a wide streamer of yellowish-white light was produced from her wand extending to the last two attackers. When it struck them, they let out a muffled scream and crumpled onto the worn path. They didn't move at all.

Mira turned to see Samantha breathing heavily and a look of defiance still adorned her face. Alex grabbed Mira's cloak and pulled her to Sirius's motionless body. Alex performed the reviving charm and Sirius began to stir slightly. Mira was still staring at her friend who looked poised for another attack. Footsteps could be heard coming up the path. Samantha swiveled on the balls of her feet lowering into a crouch with her wand out.

Harry Potter's pale face greeted them, but there were no greetings exchanged. He swished his wand and the attackers' wands flew into his awaiting hand. Samantha joined her friends helping Sirius to his unsteady feet. Hermione quickly joined them slightly out of breath. Her wand was also out ready to be used.

Harry looked at the situation before him. He thought for a dozen seconds or so and then spoke. "You three help Mr. Weasley to the hospital wing. I will tend to these students. Go, now!"

Needing no other orders, Samantha, Mira, and Alex assisted Sirius to the castle and to the hospital wing. Madam Quince came over to them quickly and began fussing over Sirius. A few minutes later the door opened and Professor Dumbledore entered the room wearing a smile. He stopped at the foot of the bed Sirius was in and stood quietly as if waiting for an answer. The silence was interrupted only by Harry and Hermione's entrance. Before them, two Slytherins were helping two other unconscious Slytherins into the room. Madam Quince rushed over to help the injured students into empty beds.

"What were they hit with?" Madam Quince asked Hermione.

"I am not sure," Hermione said looking at Harry and then Samantha.

Dumbledore turned to Samantha with a quizzical look in his eyes. "Ms. Brooks, would you mind telling Madam Quince what you used to subdue Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Chase?"

Samantha sighed and answered, "The Evinco Charm, Professor Dumbledore, sir."

Dumbledore raised his eyebrows and smiled. Hermione looked a bit shocked at first, but she relaxed quickly. Grond and Stron looked confused, but that was nothing unusual for them.

Madam Quince was the first to speak following Samantha's announcement. "How did a fourth year student master a charm that Aurors use?"

"My father taught it to me," Samantha said. "He has always been concerned about my safety."

"That spell is used to subdue large groups of people not two students like yourself," Madam Quince was not happy with the situation.

"I am sure that Ms. Brooks did not know the identity of her attackers when she used the spell," Hermione said moving over to her son's bedside. "If these students hadn't attacked their fellow classmates, this never would have happened."

"If you wouldn't mind, Samantha," Professor Dumbledore began. "Would you mind telling me what happened today?"

Samantha explained how they were attacked on the path and how she protected her friends from the second assault. She also explained her reasons for using spells beyond her years. When she finished, the room was silent except for two Slytherins who were stirring in their beds slowly regaining their senses.

Harry was the first to say anything. "Twenty five points from each of the aggressors and three detentions. I assume both of you can inform the others that this type of behavior will not be accepted from anyone."

Grond and Stron nodded understanding the punishment for their actions. They were dismissed by Hermione and left the room without another sound. Sirius was fully awake now looking from person to person. Mira settled him as Alex joined Samantha standing in front of the Professors.

"Professor," Alex started weakly. "Samantha was only defending herself and us. She didn't do anything but save us from being hurt."

Dumbledore raised his hand silencing her. "I know Ms. Willows. You and your friends are not in trouble for the events of today. I only hope this does not become a frequent occurrence this year. Wouldn't you agree?"

"Yes, sir," Alex said happy that they weren't going to be punished.

Dumbledore left leaving Harry and Hermione to handle things. Sirius was feeling better and wanted to leave the hospital wing.

"You will stay until you are cleared," Hermione snapped in a tone between teacher and mother.

Harry pulled Samantha to the side to talk so the others couldn't hear them.

"Good use of the spell, my dear," Harry said not controlling his pride. "You used that spell as good as any I have seen. Your shield charm on your friends was a nice touch too. You remember what I have taught you, I am very proud." Samantha smiled and nodded. "Please watch yourself. They will come after you again especially after this. Keep your friends close and stay alert."

"I will, Sir," Samantha said. "Thank you for understanding."

It was only another few minutes before Sirius was cleared to leave, and the kids went back up to the common room. Everyone in the room fell silent when they entered. Mark Johnson came over and asked them what happened. Mira explained the scenario and the others nodded when they needed to.

“It is a good thing you didn’t get into trouble,” Mark said relieved. “We can’t afford to lose you guys. The team wouldn’t stand a chance.”

Many people asked how they took down four Slytherins, but the group had agreed to keep the events secret. The rumors would of course run rampant without their side of the story, but they didn’t see a need to put any additional attention on Samantha right now.

The dinner that night was as amazing as ever. The roast, chicken, and ham were wonderful. The treats were perfect as well. Cakes of all sorts adorned the tables after the main course was whisked away. Pies lined the center of the table and creams and tarts were intermixed with goblets of pumpkin juice. Floating jack-o-lanterns hovered above the tables lit by candles. Bats flew around the room in formation squeaking now and then.

Samantha found the night to be perfectly enjoyable considering the events of earlier. She and the others drifted off to sleep with full bellies and their minds at ease.

It was one o’clock in the morning when Samantha shot awake feeling a wave of cold race over her. Something bad had happened somewhere to someone she cared about.

## 10. The Dark Mark

Samantha leapt out of bed pulling her cloak around her shoulders. She slipped on a pair of comfortable shoes and left the dormitory headed for the common room. The fireplace only contained a few failing embers from the fire earlier in the day. The darkness of the room made Samantha uneasy and slightly worried. Maybe she was still startled by her dream or her imagination was getting the best of her. Something just didn't seem right and she couldn't put her finger on it. A faint noise came from the tower stairwell. Samantha spun around, wand out, and found a shape coming down the stairs.

"Who is it?" Samantha asked.

"It's me, put that down before you hurt me," Alex said. "What are you doing up so late? Why are you armed?"

"I had a bad dream and needed to walk around," Samantha answered her friend. "And after what happened today, of course I am going to be armed. Why, aren't you?"

"No, not in my own common room," Alex said slightly confused. She just looked at Samantha trying to figure out what was going on. "Samantha, what is wrong. Why are you crying?"

"Crying?" said Samantha rubbing her eyes finding tears on her cheek. "I don't know what is going on. I think something happened to someone close to me tonight, but I don't know what it could be."

At this moment, the portrait opened and Professor Weasley entered. She found the two girls standing in the middle of the common room one had been crying.

"Samantha, I think you should come with me," Hermione said in a motherly tone. "Ms. Willows, you should go back up to bed now."

"What is it?" Cried Samantha. "It isn't my father, is it? Is it?"

"You had better come with me, my dear," Hermione said clearly worried about something.

Samantha stepped forward joining Hermione and they turned to leave the room. Alex jumped ahead and followed them out into the hallway.

“Alexandra, I do not think you should come with us,” Hermione said.

“It is OK, Professor,” Samantha said trying to maintain her composure. “She is my friend and I trust her.”

“Very well, Samantha. If you insist.”

Hermione led Samantha and Alex to the hospital wing. When the door was opened, Samantha saw Professor Dumbledore standing amongst a group of three other wizards she had never seen before. Dumbledore seemed to giving them instructions and everyone nodded multiple times before they broke apart.

“Thank you, Hermione,” Dumbledore said. “Ms. Willows, I think you should wait outside for a little bit.”

Alex turned to leave, but Samantha grabbed her arm and held her where she stood. Alex shifted to look at Samantha and then Dumbledore.

“As you wish, Ms. Potter,” Dumbledore said.

Alex looked around and finally stopped on Samantha’s face, which was obviously fighting the urge to cry. Samantha had her hand free hand firmly on her locket. “Potter? Samantha what is he talking about?”

The others in the room were staring at Samantha equally confused by Dumbledore’s statement.

“Where is he?” Samantha asked the old man standing in front of her. “I want to see him, now.”

Dumbledore moved to the side and in a bed behind him laid Harry. He wasn’t moving at all and blood was running down his face. Madam Quince was busying herself at a cabinet along the wall. Samantha moved towards her father dragging Alex behind. The tears began to flow freely down her face wetting her cloak.

Alex was only released when Samantha grabbed Harry's hand and held it tightly in hers. Alex looked at the injured body of her teacher and then to Samantha who was oblivious to everyone around her. Alex looked at Hermione hoping she would explain what was going on.

Dumbledore answered Alex's question. "Ms. Willows, Samantha is Harry's daughter. The fact that you are here proves that you are a trusted friend and I am sure that you would like nothing more than to help them. The best thing you can do to help them is to say nothing you hear tonight to anyone. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Professor," Alex stammered not really understanding what was going on. She moved to Samantha's side and stood watching Dumbledore and everyone else.

"Kingsley, repeat what you just said," Dumbledore ordered.

"Well Professor," Kingsley started. "Harry showed up at my door with information about an attack in a small village near Lympe. I notified Tonks and Marrows of the location and the details I had. We all met at the station to organize ourselves. When we got there a few houses were ablaze and people were running around screaming. We split up into pairs and moved through the town searching for them. They must not have expected us so soon, because they were still running around leveling structures and torturing muggles."

"I was with Harry," the woman named Tonks said. "Once we knocked one of them down, they all attacked. We fought off two of them, but I fell down tripping Harry. When I got to my feet another one knocked me out of the way. That was when they pulled down the wall of a house on top of Harry. He had enough time to protect himself from the worst of it, but he couldn't stop the others who joined. I was able to fight off the new ones, but Harry had to release his shield to attack. That was when he was hit by a curse. He never got back up after that."

"I see, and what of the mark?" Dumbledore asked.

"When we got to Harry and Tonks, that was when they sent up the Dark Mark," Kingsley informed Dumbledore. "I went and checked on



the area below the mark. There was a family of muggles still in their beds.”

Alex couldn't believe what she was hearing. Samantha, Harry, and now the Dark Mark. There hadn't been a case of the mark being used in years.

Hermione was watching Samantha. Her eyes were closed and she seemed to be sitting very still. “Samantha, are you ok?” Hermione asked but she received no reply.

Dumbledore turned and watched the child as well. She didn't move at all. She was just sitting there with her eyes closed. “Samantha, I am sure he will be ok.”

A few minutes went by and everyone was watching Samantha intently. She slowly relaxed and opened her eyes. She turned to find the whole room was staring at her. “He is OK,” she said. “He is fighting his way back to us.”

“Good,” Dumbledore said. “I would like very much to speak to him when he has returned to us. Hermione, you will stay here with Harry and the children until he regains consciousness. I am sure you weren't going to leave his side anyway remembering how you stayed with him all those years ago.”

“You are quite correct, Albus,” Hermione said. “I will watch after the children until their friends come for them in the morning.”

“Samantha,” Alex said quietly. “What is going on?”

“He knew something was going on and he tried to help,” Samantha said. “He was always doing that when he was in school, but I didn't think this would happen now.”

“Harry Potter is your father?” Alex said not believing her own words.

“Yes, and you can't say anything to anyone about it or else this could be me lying here.”

"I know that now," Alex answered. "Who else knows about you and him?"

"The Weasleys. Mira found out earlier this year accidentally."

The adults were discussing something out of range of the bed. Tonks was getting excited about something and Kingsley had to settle her down. Her hair had changed colors from the light purple to a fiery red. Their voices had risen in volume and a few words could be heard now and then. "Death Eater" "McNair" "Killed" "Worm" "Named" "Coming". Dumbledore raised his hands calming the people down before they continued. His eyes went from one person to another as they spoke. His mind was obviously figuring out what all these events meant for the future.

Finally a few sentences escaped the conversation, "We should not speculate on things that have yet to occur, my friend," Dumbledore told Kingsley. "One of us would know far in advance of the others if what you believe were true."

Samantha stirred when she heard this. Hermione and Alex took notice of her shudder. Dumbledore must have sensed the change in their mood for he came over to the bed.

"Samantha, do you know something that you haven't told us?"

"There is another thing, Professor," Samantha stumbled on the words. "His scar hurt before he left for Lympe."

Dumbledore seemed to expect this news and didn't move upon hearing it.

"How do you know that?" Hermione asked with worry in her voice.

"I just know, Professor," replied Samantha.

"It appears you are correct, Kingsley," said Dumbledore slightly defeated. "You know what to do now. Go!"

"Yes, sir."

Kingsley and Marrows left the room immediately. Tonks joined the women next to Harry. "Tell him, I am sorry I fell and caused all this to happen." Tonks took a deep breath and left the room as well.

"Samantha, how long have you had a link with your father?" Dumbledore asked.

"As long as I can remember, sir," Samantha answered. "We have worked over the years to refine and control it. That is how I can perform such advanced magic."

"I see," commented Dumbledore in way Samantha knew he expected more information. "How far can you enter his mind?"

"I can only go as far as he lets me," Samantha said. "He wanted me to know about his scar. Other than that, there isn't anything else I can give you."

"You have done well, Samantha," Dumbledore said softly resting his hand on her shoulder. "Your father would be proud of you."

Hermione and Alex didn't say anything, but they were concerned by what they had just heard. Dumbledore noticed their looks and explained the situation.

"Sometimes," Dumbledore spoke quietly. "A child of a powerful wizard will have a mental link with their parent. It is rare, but not unheard of. Samantha has just such a link with Harry."

"I have never read about it, Professor," said Hermione obviously skeptical of anything she hadn't read about. "Is it like Legilimency or ESP?"

"It would be similar, I suppose," Dumbledore said. "But I doubt it would be as clear as either of those. Samantha would be a much better person to ask about the details, but she might wish to keep that information secret."

Alex just stared at Samantha. She didn't know what to say or do. Hermione was equally puzzled by the night's events. Before her laid

her best friend, unconscious. His scar had been hurting him and that meant only one thing.

"Samantha, do you know how long his scar had been hurting him?" Hermione asked fearing the answer.

"Not really, he didn't tell me," Samantha offered. "I only know it hurt him before they left for the village."

"Does this mean what I think it does, Professor?" Hermione asked Dumbledore.

"It may, Hermione," Dumbledore sighed. "We will learn that when Harry joins us again, but I am preparing for what we fear." Dumbledore turned to Madam Quince who had joined the group at Harry's bed. "Notify me of any change in his condition. These three will be staying the night. Please extend them every courtesy." The elderly man strolled to the doors in deep thought and slipped out of the wing.

"Into bed, both of you," Hermione said ushering Alex to an adjacent bed. Samantha didn't move from her perch. "Samantha, you need to get some rest. He is in good hands." Samantha turned and Hermione saw the same determination in her eyes that Harry often had when he was that age. She knew she would never win this battle and gave in. "Alright, but please get some rest before morning. Your father wouldn't be very happy with me if I let you stay awake all night." Hermione lay down on the bed next to Harry's. She kept watch over Harry and Samantha until exhausted sleep overtook her.

Samantha sat in her chair with her eyes closed trying to communicate with Harry. She could feel the pain of his injuries and the burn of his scar. Various images floated around before her, but she didn't know what they meant or what they were. Her normally talkative father was suspiciously absent. Despite her calls, he didn't greet her or tell her anything. She waded through the abstract pictures trying to find her father. What seemed like hours of walking she came across a hunched over man kneeling beside a woman. She wasn't moving and he was crying. Samantha moved to the side of the man and saw a small child huddled next to the woman. The scene was very sad and dark. The man turned and looked at Samantha. She saw that it sort of

resembled her father, but there was something about the man that was unfamiliar.

A feeling of motion, pushing, swept Samantha down an alley and into small, dimly lit room. The man from the street was standing across from her looking like her father. The unfamiliarity was replaced with a warm and welcoming smile. The room seemed more comfortable. A fireplace appeared on the wall behind Samantha and portraits decorated the other walls. As she stood there looking at Harry, decorations were continually being added to the room. Soft chairs and a couch had joined the fireplace along with a small table and a pitcher of pumpkin juice. A large, plush rug separated the chairs from the couch. The man motioned for her to sit on the couch, which she did sinking into the cushions. Harry sat in the opposite chair gazing warmly at her. She turned her head to look at the fire and a pillow appeared by her head joined by a comfortable blanket wrapping around her.

“Dad, was that mom you were crying over?”

“You weren’t supposed to see her that way, Honey. I want you to remember her the way she was with you, not like that. Please forget what you saw.”

“But that is how you remember her, isn’t it?”

“At times. When I am sad or worried about you, I see her like that. That image has become my despair, my fear. You should not have such images in your mind.”

“I am OK, Father. You shouldn’t worry about me, I am the one who has to worry about you.”

“No, you don’t. You do not need these concerns at your age.”

“But, you had them and worse ones when you were my age. Why should I be any different? I am your daughter after all.”

“A father hopes his children are happier than he was. Less worries, less concerns, less danger. I had a childhood that you should not. I have worked all these years to avoid you reliving it.”

"I am happy with my life, Father. I couldn't ask for anything more except you not getting yourself into things like this. You scared me when I saw you lying in the bed."

"For that, I am sorry, Dear. I couldn't let those muggles be killed when I could do something about it."

"I know that and I accept it. I know who you are and what you do. We are not that different though. I am my father's daughter and you can't change that."

"I failed to protect her and I can not fail again. You are too important to me for that to happen. There is nothing I won't do."

"You didn't fail her. You did the best you could. It was out of your control don't blame yourself."

"Thank you, but let's speak of something else. Why did you return?"

"I wanted to know more about what happened and what the scar means."

"I am sure you know what happened, and the scar means what it has always meant. Now, more than ever, your true identity needs to be kept secret."

"I know. More people know now. Those people from the attack and Alex know."

"You trust Alex, and I trust the others, but we need to work to harder to keep it hidden from anyone else. Once something like this gets outside of our control, it is impossible to contain."

The fire in the fireplace burned happily producing a crack or pop now and then. The couch was very comfortable and Samantha was getting sleepy. Every now and then the images in the portraits would change. Dark images of pain and death would appear, but were quickly replaced with the pleasant scenes of nature, family, and friends. Samantha figured Harry was still recovering from his injuries and had lapses in concentration.

He was watching her thinking of her mother. How they looked alike and had very similar personalities. "It is time for you to sleep my dear. Just close your eyes and rest. We will talk more when I wake up." Samantha laid down on the couch curling up into a ball and fell asleep.

The sunshine woke her up. She opened her eyes and found a blanket wrapped around her and a pillow behind her head. She searched the room and saw Alex still asleep in a bed, but Hermione was sitting on Harry's bed watching him. Another person had joined them. Ron was sitting with Hermione watching Harry as well. From the stories she had heard, Samantha figured they were both used to being in this situation.

"He is going to be OK," Samantha said. "He is getting better."

"Thank you," said Hermione more relieved. "I see you got some sleep, finally."

"I guess I did," replied Samantha. "He told me to sleep after we talked."

"You spoke to him, he was awake?" Ron asked excitedly.

"She can enter his mind and speak to him," Hermione told Ron dousing his hopes. "It is like Legilimency only more pleasant."

Ron shivered at the thought of someone breaking into his mind dredging up all his greatest fears. Hermione got up and went to Samantha. She put her arm around her and gave a squeeze. Samantha held on to it for a while thinking how wonderful the touch of a mother was even if it wasn't hers. She let go when Alex stirred and woke up.

"How is he?" Alex asked sleepily.

"He will be fine," Answered Ron.

"Mr. Weasley! How nice to meet you again," said Alex startled by his presence.

“Don’t be alarmed,” Ron said noticing her surprised. “I have spent many hours waiting for Harry to wake up. He always finds himself in trouble one way or another.”

Madam Quince came over and produced some breakfast for the girls so they didn’t have to leave.

“When Madam Pomfrey retired she left me all the old records of her patients,” Madam Quince said. “I read Mr. Potter’s and thought she had left it as a joke. If this is what I can expect from him this year, I had better stock up on certain potions soon.”

“I assure you, Madam Quince, the records are correct,” Hermione answered. “Just remember, those are only the documented treatments by Madam Pomfrey. During sixth year, I study the basic healing spells and helped Harry avoid Poppy’s care for any but the more serious injuries.”

“Yes, Poppy left a note in his folder stating that she was concerned that he was seeking treatment ‘elsewhere’ during the last 2 years he was here,” Quince stated. “She made mention that a certain ‘resourceful friend’ was most likely the cause of his sparse visitation.”

Before the sun rose too high, Ron and Hermione left the hospital wing. Hermione was going to get Sirius and Mira before they made a scene drawing even more attention to the absences of Alex and Samantha.

It was an hour or so later when Hermione brought Sirius and Mira into the hospital wing. They rushed over to Samantha offering her comfort and hugs. They both paused when they saw Harry lying motionless in the bed. They never thought their teacher could have been injured like this.

“Are you OK, Samantha?” Sirius asked.

“I am all right, I guess,” Samantha said. “He will be fine in a few days.”

“I think you should read this before you join the other students,” Hermione said holding out a copy of today’s Daily Prophet.



The headlines were ominous, *"Dark Mark Over Dead Family, Harry Potter Injured."* The article read like a horror story. The deaths, the mark, even how her father had been attacked. There was even a comment from Minister Weasley, "Harry Potter will be fine. He is at an undisclosed location doing very well. This attack shows us that we have a long way to go before the remnants of the Dark Lord are finally brought to justice."

When she had finished reading the article, Hermione spoke. "Students will be waiting outside hoping to catch a glimpse of Professor Potter. Most people guess he is here because this is the safest place for anybody. I have been given permission to create a portkey for you to use when you need to visit. It will take you from here to the common room. Be careful how and when you use it. The less questions right now the better."

"I understand, Professor," Samantha said knowing full well how touchy the situation had become. If she were seen visiting Harry, it would only be a matter of time before the entire school had thought up fifty different reasons why.

After lunch, the group decided they needed to get outside. Samantha, most of all, needed to get her mind off of current events. They took the portkey back to the common room since everyone was outside enjoying the last of the warm days before winter came. When Samantha had changed clothes and freshened up, they all went outside and sat by the lake. The giant squid was doing laps putting on a show for a few groups of students who had congregated. Everyone did his or her best to get Samantha to smile, but she was humoring them. Once the sun began to disappear and the air grew colder, they went in for dinner. Afterwards, they all sat in the common room working on homework they had ignored. It was late when Samantha went to her room. Alex and Mira had to practically drag her up to the room. She fell asleep reluctantly and her dreams were as frightening as she had feared. She kept seeing her father hit by curses and her mother lying in the street as she had appeared in Harry's mind.

## 11. The Order Of The Phoenix

Monday's classes were upon Samantha before she knew it. Her restless night filled with terrible dreams and ghostly imagery left Samantha exhausted. It wasn't until Defense that she became fully aware of her surroundings. With Harry's noticeable absence, the class was dedicated to reading and study. Lunch was a blur as well leaving Samantha unprepared for Potions. She had forgotten all about the incident with Malfoy and his friends, but Snape hadn't forgotten at all.

The greasy haired man swept into class wearing a happier look than anyone had ever seen before. The assignment was given with a certain flare that was definitely foreign in the dungeons. Most Slytherins were taken aback by Snape's near joyous mood. That was until he stopped by Samantha's table. His normal scowl returned tempered by years of practice. He obviously knew the details of Saturday's confrontation.

"Ms. Willows, what do you think you are doing?" Snape asked trying to provoke her. He only received a headshake in response. "I believe you are listening to Ms. Andrews too often. The eyes are added after the wing tips not before. I doubt either of you will be able to salvage your work before the period is up. And Mr. Weasley, I see you are having issues as well." The smoke from Sirius's cauldron was a dim orange not solid yellow like it was supposed to be. "I have no idea what you have done, but you still have ten minutes to waste before you receive a zero." The Slytherins in class had a good laugh at the abuse Snape was dishing out, but Samantha knew her turn was next and most likely was going to be the worst of them.

"Ms. Brooks," Snape drooled. "The quality of work you are showing today is unacceptable. Perhaps if you had spent more time this weekend studying and less time picking fights with fellow students, you would have completed this assignment. However, since you have failed to follow the instructions you will receive a zero and you will write a paper on how to properly produce the draft assigned today."

Sirius jerked like he was about to say something, but Samantha was quick to put a hand on his leg silencing him before he made matters

worse. Snape saw that he had gotten to Sirius and proceeded to berate the four of them for the remainder of the time. The others noticed Samantha avoiding the bait and followed suit not giving Snape the satisfaction.

All Gryffindors cleared out of class as fast as possible. They knew Snape was trying to find a reason to dock points to make up for Saturday. It wasn't until Care of Magical Creatures that anyone relaxed enough to speak.

"That was completely out of line," Sirius growled. "He was egging us on hoping we would get into it with him."

"Of course he was," Mira added. "He was trying to get revenge on us and Samantha. We had better watch ourselves this week. It is only going to get worse since he failed today."

Hagrid was excited about the Blast-Ended Skrewts he had acquired for the class. Many people kept their distance from the creatures. They didn't look at all friendly or pleased to be where they were. The class finished with a few singed cloaks, but nothing major. Samantha managed to finish her paper that night, but her thoughts were on her father. After everyone had gone to sleep, she took the portkey to his bedside. His condition was unchanged from the day before. She tried to enter his mind, but all she saw was mist and swirls. After an hour of trying to communicate with him, she admitted defeat. She kissed his forehead and returned to the common room.

Sleep was easier to achieve this night, but it was haunted with similar visions. She awoke not feeling more rested than the night before. History was dull as usual. Professor Binns could put a dragon to sleep just by talking and Samantha found a few minutes of rest before Mira nudged her awake. Charms proved to be more enjoyable. They were working on repair charms for magical items that had been damaged or worn out. After lunch they entered the Transfiguration classroom. Hermione was sitting at her desk engrossed in a book. Only when class was sounded did she look up at the students.

She announced the assignment and everyone began working. Samantha wasn't trying to accomplish the task. She was distracted drawing the attention of Sirius who had been helping her.

"You need to concentrate, Samantha," Sirius said. "This is a difficult spell to master, but it is a valuable skill."

"I know, Sirius," Samantha said with her heart not into it. "I can't focus on things right now. I don't know what is wrong."

"Try to do your best, that is the most you can do," said Sirius in an understanding tone.

The class was halfway through. Of her table, only Samantha had yet to master the spell. Hermione came over and offered assistance.

"Focus, concentrate on the outcome and let the rest of it happen," Hermione instructed.

Samantha did as she was told and tried her best. In the middle of her attempt, a sudden rush of thoughts entered her mind. The spell went terribly wrong causing the sphere she was using to explode. The entire class ducked at the sound and stared at her. Hermione was shocked by the outcome.

"That isn't part of the spell, Ms. Brooks."

"Professor, I am not feeling well," said Samantha trying to hint at something. "I think I might need to see the nurse."

Hermione noticed the urgency in her voice. "If you think it best, then go see the nurse. Work on the spell tonight and be prepared to show it too me next class."

Samantha thanked Hermione and rushed out of the classroom. She nearly ran to the hospital wing dodging a group of Ravenclaws who were walking slowly down the corridor. When she entered the infirmary she found Dumbledore sitting at her father's bed. Harry was sitting up talking with him. She ran over to him giving him a big hug.

"I see you were quite correct about her speed," Dumbledore said smiling. "I will leave you two to discuss things. Call me when you are ready to talk again, Harry."

Samantha wouldn't let go of Harry. It seemed like forever before she released him. They discussed the events of the Saturday night and anything since. Harry felt guilty for putting his daughter through everything.

"I am sorry for what happened, Honey."

"I understand why you did it, Daddy. Just promise me you will be more careful in the future."

"It is a deal," Harry added as Hermione entered the room.

"I see why Samantha had to leave class," Hermione stated in an official tone. "Will you stop doing this to us?"

"Some things never change, Hermione," Harry said with a chuckle. "I will do my best to avoid this in the future."

It was dinnertime when Samantha left the hospital wing at her father's urging. She joined her friends in the Great Hall wearing a smile. They asked why she was so happy since she was supposed to be sick. They finished as quickly as possible and headed up to the tower where they could talk privately. They were all happy to hear Harry was better.

"Class has been boring," Alex said as the others nodded. "I am tired of reading for the double period. I hope he has something fun planned when he returns."

The next Monday, Alexandra received her wish. When the class filtered into the room, it was Mira who noticed Harry sitting at his desk. She couldn't resist turning to the others and tell them. It had become normal for everyone to walk into the classroom and not look up. Now everyone, except the Slytherins, were anxious to hear what Harry had planned for them.

"Good to see you again," Harry began. "I trust you have all read ahead some. I think we should do something a little different today." The class looked amongst themselves not knowing what to expect. Samantha saw the smile creep across her father's face. She couldn't

stop herself from shaking her head slowly. Sirius saw her and asked what was wrong, but she only lowered her head and fought a smile.

When class had ended, many students were holding their sides still trying to catch their breath. Harry had setup another room as an obstacle course. He told the students it was inspired by the Triwizard Tournament. There were beasts and spells to defeat while making your way through the course. It was safer and far shorter than the actual maze Harry had conquered years before, but the challenge was real. Only about a quarter of the students managed to complete it in the allowed time period. Samantha finished it the fastest, followed by Sirius and Alex. Mira came in after a Slytherin girl who had always showed great potential.

“How do you always win in this class?” Rachel asked Samantha.

Ignoring the smiles from her group of friends, Samantha told her roommate that she didn’t know, but she practiced whenever she had a spare moment. Malfoy didn’t fair very well during the task. He had been careless when avoiding a bog in the middle of the path and didn’t see a vine of Devil’s Snare lying along the way he chose. Once he had touched the vine, the plant enveloped him. Harry rescued him right after his mouth had been covered. Harry’s parting words to the class were about spells being only one facet of an attack and that forgetting their other subjects would cause them greater harm than a well placed curse.

The weather had turned cold over the past few weeks. The match between Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff had come and went nearly as fast as December was approaching. Ravenclaw had capitalized on an inexperienced keeper and uncoordinated beaters to score thirteen times before Hufflepuff’s seeker caught the snitch. Classes were piling on assignments and papers leading up to the holidays. Samantha and her friends were spending more and more time studying and writing. Thursday’s quidditch practice had to be moved to Saturday morning to free up time during the week for studies. Much to their displeasure, the students Samantha had been helping with Defense only received tutoring once a week. Samantha, herself, needed help with her classes and spent much of her time being tutored by Sirius, Alex, and Mira.

Late one night after studying, the girls were in their dormitory talking about classes and homework before they went to sleep. Mira was brushing her hair and Alex was petting Edrea. They had just commented on how poorly they had done on their last Potion assignment when Samantha shuddered.

"Samantha, what is it?" Asked a concerned Alex.

Mira put down her brush and came over to Samantha's bed. "Samantha, is it your father?"

Samantha could only shrug in response. She didn't know what was going on. He wasn't hurt, but he wasn't fine either. "Something isn't right, but I don't know what it is." After some thought, she decided she was going to visit her father and see if he could tell her what was going on. Her friends offered to come with her, but she declined their offer not wanting them to risk getting in trouble by being out after hours.

On her way down stairs to the common room she passed Rachel on her way up. Samantha wished her a good night, but wouldn't say where she was going. The nearly deserted common room held only a few fifth and seventh years that were studying for their O.W.L's and N.E.W.T's. They didn't notice her slip out of the room, but the Fat Lady saw her. A few comments about her being out after curfew and threats of punishment fell silent as Samantha made her way to her father's room. She knocked several times on his door, but no answer was given. The anxiety was mounting inside Samantha. Something wasn't right and her father wasn't in his room.

As she raised her hand to knock on Professor Weasley's door, Samantha thought about what she was getting herself into. Hermione had never shied from delivering punishments to her members of her own house. With a deep breath, she knocked. After a few more attempts with no reply, Samantha was definitely worried. She closed her eyes seeking out her father wherever he was. It didn't take long to find him, but his mind was very closed. All she could see was a stone gargoyle. She had seen this before in the second floor hallway. As if obeying an order, she walked to the second floor hallway and found the stone gargoyle.

“What now?” Samantha said to herself but speaking out loud. An image of the slug cream the Weasley twins had shown her appeared in her mind. “Slug Creams, what do they have to do with anything?” She said out loud finding the thought to be stupid. The stone statue started moving immediately upon her words. Samantha stepped back looking around for someone who could have caused the statue to move, but no one could be seen in the silent hallway. Urging herself on she decided she had come this far and wasn’t going to give up now. The uneasy feeling she had felt in the common room still remained unresolved.

Samantha began the long climb up the hidden stairwell where she found a wooden door at the top. She could hear voices beyond it, but they were speaking too low to understand the words. She stood there wondering if anything else was going to happen when the voices stopped. Fear was welling up inside her. She wasn’t sure what to expect now.

The door flung open and soft light bathed the entryway. Samantha saw a ghastly figure standing at the door with a wand pointed at her. Instinct took over and she jumped to one side casting the repelling charm and disarming charm in sequence. The figure flew back into the room and his wand was neatly deposited at Samantha’s feet. Only a familiar voice from the room eased her already tense nerves.

“Samantha, it is OK,” Harry said with a hint of laughter to his voice. “Please come in and refrain from attacking anyone else.”

Not knowing what to say, Samantha entered the room and saw her father among many people. Some she knew or at least had seen before; Hermione, Ginny, Ron, Arthur, Molly, Fred, George, Tonks, Kingsley, Hagrid, and Professor Dumbledore. The others she didn’t know including the person getting back to his feet.

“Bloody children,” said a very rough looking man. “My wand, child.”

Samantha turned and summoned the wand into her hand. She hesitated returning it, but Harry nodded his head indicating it was all right to do so.



"See what I have been telling you," said the older man. "Retirement has made me so slow that a young child can beat me."

It was only now that Samantha noticed the magical eye the man had in place of a real one. She knew who this was now but was ashamed to admit it. "I am sorry, Mr. Moody, but you did have your wand pointed at me and you yourself say to shoot first and ask questions later."

"One, I don't know anything about Mr.," Mad Eye began. "Two, I always greet unfamiliar people with my wand. Find it saves time pulling it out. And three, I am glad to see Harry has been teaching the students properly."

"Still, that is no way to introduce yourself to someone, Sir," Samantha said staring him down.

"Spirit I see," Mad Eye said looking her up and down. "Quick with a wand, too."

Samantha looked to Hermione searching for answers not wanting to stare at her father. Hermione stepped forward upon seeing the conflict on Samantha's face.

"What is it Ms. Brooks?" Hermione asked.

Samantha was truly confused. She had a bad feeling and that drove her to what was obviously Dumbledore's office. "Something was wrong, Professor. I am sorry I interrupted your discussion. I will leave."

"She might have heard something," Mad Eye stated looking at the others with his real eye while the other was fixed on Samantha. "We need to wipe her memory to be safe." Mad Eye raised his wand causing Samantha to go into a defensive stance.

"Stay your wand, Mad Eye," Harry said. "She didn't hear anything that won't be known by everyone tomorrow."

"You forget yourself, Potter," Mad Eye retorted. "We have to be very careful about who knows what. And I don't believe a child can be trusted with these things."

"Did you say the same things about me when I was a child?" Harry asked with silence following. "I didn't think so. Samantha, please wait in the entryway until we are finished."

Dumbledore quelled mad Eye's objection when Samantha turned to leave the office. The door closed behind her and the voices began again only quieter than before.

The door opened with Hermione and Ginny in the lead and Harry closely behind. At the bottom of the steps, Ginny said good night and went to her office. Harry and Hermione ushered Samantha to Hermione's office in silence. It was after midnight when they entered the room. Once the door closed, Samantha knew what she was in for.

"Explain yourself, Samantha," Hermione commanded.

"I felt something was wrong," Samantha tried to explain. "When I couldn't find my father in his room, I came here and you were gone too. That was when I saw the stone gargoye in my head."

Hermione turned to Harry looking for an answer. "Well, do you have something to say?"

"I am sorry you felt that Samantha," Harry said looking deep into Samantha's eyes. "My control slipped for a second and that was what you felt."

"What caused you to drop your guard?" Samantha asked puzzled by the statement.

"It was just some information that was discussed. Pay it no mind."

"And what are the chances of that happening?" Samantha asked her father not needing an answer.

Harry seemed deep in thought for a few minutes figuring out what he was going to say. "Things are happening again that I do not want to

be repeated. What you saw tonight was a meeting of the Order Of The Phoenix. Please, do not read into this too much, Honey. We are safe and so are those close to us. It is very late and you need to get to bed. We will discuss this later, I promise."

The next day's Daily Prophet had limited information in it. Mostly, the paper concentrated on speculation and rumors certain people had been talking about in the editorial section for weeks. There had been a few unusual break-ins at wizarding homes and small items removed. People claimed to have seen Death Eaters near their homes, but no evidence had been discovered.

As the last few weeks leading up to the holidays raced by, Samantha had grown annoyed with her father. She had tried to talk to him many times after class or late at night, but he seemed to be avoiding her. The most she could get out of him was a hug and an "I love you" before he shooed her away or changed the subject.

"What is wrong, Samantha?" Asked Sirius as they waited in the common room for the announcement to head to Hogsmeade to catch the train home for the holidays.

"Oh, nothing," she began. "It's just, he has been avoiding me. I don't know what is going on and he won't tell me."

"Well, maybe he will tell you over the break," consoled Mira. "My parents have seemed preoccupied in their last few owls. They won't tell me what is going on either."

"I am sure you are both reading more into it than there really is," Alex stated. "If there is anything to be worried about, I am sure you will find out over the holidays."

"I better, or I might have to force it out of him," said Samantha feeling more rebellious than she normally felt concerning her father."

## 12. Christmas Holidays

The train ride to London was uneventful aside from a small encounter with Malfoy and his tag-alongs. Ginny had been patrolling the train and broke up the exchange of words before anything got out of hand. Arthur arranged for a ministry car to take the children home from Kings Cross. Samantha was going to spend the break with the Weasleys just as she had before school. Once their things were upstairs and put away, Hermione called them down for dinner. Sirius teased James as they descended the stairs to the main level.

"How many detentions have you had?" Sirius asked.

"I have only gotten three," James said shaking his head. "I am really off my mark this year. The uncles won't be pleased with me."

Sirius had to laugh at the image of Fred and George scolding James at Christmas for letting them down. Lily giggled at her own picture in her head. When they entered the kitchen, they saw Hermione, Ron, and Harry waiting for them. Samantha sat between Sirius and Lily allowing James to sit next to Harry. She was still mad to her father for avoiding her the last few weeks and she wasn't going to let him off this easy. Dinner continued with normal talk of school, classes, and quidditch. Harry kept trying to catch his daughter's eye, but she refused to look at him. After the late dinner and such a long day filled with traveling, everyone retired early for the evening.

Samantha was getting ready for bed when she heard a voice ask her to come down stairs. Knowing she couldn't ignore her father all break, she decided now was as good a time as any. Only the dying fire in the fireplace lit the living room. Harry sat quietly on the couch watching the small flames attempting to devour the last remaining log. She joined her father on the couch but at the opposite end.

"You wanted something, Father," Samantha said making every effort to expose her sarcasm.

"I made you a promise, and I am going to keep it," Harry said staring blankly at the fire. "Ask what you wish to know."

Samantha figured she would ask the hard questions first to make her father really squirm. "Has Voldemort returned?"

Not missing a step, Harry answered her question. "Not yet, but I fear he will be joining us soon."

Samantha was shocked by how quickly her father had answered as if he knew what the question was going to be. "How many people have died already?"

"Since Halloween, we have found four dead and three people are missing," Harry said without moving more than his lips. "The meeting you walked in on was to discuss one death and two of the missing people among other things."

"What other things?"

"The Daily Prophet mentioned the break-ins and things being stolen. Separately, these items are common and have no special abilities, but combined we believe his followers are preparing to bring about his return. The Order has been working to learn where they are for many weeks. Thus far, we have not learned much more than what has been reported publicly. I do not want you to be scared, only more careful. No matter where you go, always have at least one other person with you."

"Ever since Halloween, my friends have never left me alone aside from the night of the meeting. If Sirius knew about that, he would have been really mad at Mira and Alex."

"Do you have anymore questions, Honey?"

"Are you still helping the others on the attacks?"

"No. After last time, Dumbledore has chosen to keep me off the front lines. I only provide information now."

"Good!" Said Samantha with relief. "You have fought your battles, now it is someone else's turn."

“My fight is not over yet, Honey. When the time comes, I will do what must be done to save those I can. With any luck, we can stop him from returning before it happens. There is one person left who knows enough to accomplish the task and we are doing everything we can to stop her.”

“Bellatrix?”

“She would be the last Death Eater who would possess the knowledge needed to bring him back. If we stop her in time, Voldemort might never return.”

Samantha felt the fear in her father rising up. The anger and hatred was escaping his mental control. She did the only thing she could think of to help relieve the emotions he was feeling. Samantha laid down on the couch resting her head on her father's chest. She snuggled up and told her father not to worry and that everything would be OK. “I am not going to leave you, Father.”

With tears in his eyes, Harry looked down upon his daughter. His baby was consoling him in his time of need. “I know you won't. I will do everything I can to protect you.”

“But who will protect you?”

“That is not something you should think about my dear. If you have any more questions, ask them anytime you need.”

Harry sat there hugging his daughter tightly until she fell asleep. He didn't want to wake her so he just got as comfortable as he could and went to sleep holding his little girl.

The morning sunlight shone in the windows of the Weasley house. Harry looked down and saw his darling daughter sleeping peacefully like she was an angel. Movement could be heard upstairs as the Weasley family awoke early. They had planned to go to Diagon Alley and make their holiday purchases.

“Samantha,” Harry said quietly trying to wake his daughter. “Samantha, it is time to get up.”

Samantha turned her head and slowly opened her eyes. She looked into her father's face and smiled. "Morning, Dad. I must have fallen asleep."

"That you did," Harry said with a light chuckle. "Now, you had best get ready before breakfast. You don't want to make us late going shopping."

"Does that mean you are going too?" Samantha asked hoping he was.

"I had planned on it if that is OK with you."

"It is perfect, Dad."

The house was a buzz with activity as people got ready and ate quickly. It was nearly nine before everyone was ready to go. They were going to use floo powder again and get out at the Weasley joke shop. Harry told Samantha to stick with the other kids and not get into any trouble.

Fred and George greeted everyone as they rolled onto the floor out of the fireplace. The adults stayed as the kids left the store in search of the perfect presents. The first stop was Flourish and Blotts to get something for Hermione. They found an old tome containing incantations related to ancient forms of transfiguration. The four had to chip in to buy the rare book. The clerk wrapped the present before handing it back to Sirius who dropped it in the bag Lily was carrying. Next, they went to Quality Quidditch Supplies and picked out a variety of quidditch related items for Ron.

As they left the stationary store having restocked their supplies, Samantha became worried. She had yet to find anything for her father that she liked. A small storefront near Eeylops Owl Emporium caught her attention. Interesting items and devices were displayed in the window. A few of them looked similar to things Samantha had seen in Dumbledore's office. As she entered the shop, the true nature of the store came into view. Delicate silver instruments, foe glasses, sneakoscopes, crystal balls, and many other items were on long, skinny tables running the length of the shop.

The Weasleys hung around the entrance allowing Samantha to look around privately. She browsed the wares searching for something that her father would like. After a dozen or so minutes of searching, she decided to ask the shopkeeper for assistance. An older witch with a hideous hat was gathering her purchases and preparing to leave the store freeing the clerk who had been helping her.

"Excuse me, Sir," Samantha asked. "I am looking for something for my father for Christmas. Would you have any unique items for sale?"

"Miss, I have many unique items for sale," he began showing his agitation at the insinuation everything wasn't unique. "Did you have something specifically in mind?"

"Not exactly, but I would like something that most people don't have," Samantha said trying to save the situation.

"Well, if you consider these items common," the man gestured to the pieces displayed, "then follow me. I might have a few things that would suit your request."

The man led Samantha to the rear of the store into a smaller room separated from the main room by a deep red curtain. Inside, Samantha found a much sparser array of things displayed in a respectful, honored way. An ornate sword was in a glass case at the heart of the main wall. To either side of it, hung a few daggers and a shield. Some staves and walking sticks completed the largest panel.

"Those are all magical items, I assure you," the clerk said smiling. "All were owned by famous witches or wizards. The sword belonged to King Robert I of Scotland. The other artifacts were used by royalty throughout history."

Samantha caught sight of the wall to the left of the sword. It held smaller items. There were decorative metal boxes, rings, a few pensieves, and other older looking things.

"What is this, Sir," Samantha asked.

"Miss, has exquisite taste. Bowman Wright, the creator of the snitch, used this case to store his snitch. A mahogany case, lined with red



felt, and scrawl work on the exterior denoting the year of manufacture and original owner. Normally, I would ask one hundred thirty galleons for it, but for you, miss, I am sure we could work something out.”

Samantha pondered the price. She had enough to buy it from her own account that was created when her mother died. Her father had always said it was hers to use as she saw fit, as long as she didn't make others feel less because of it. “I can offer you ninety galleons for it.”

The clerk thought about the offer for a few minutes. “And how will you be paying, miss?”

“I will sign for it and you can withdraw the amount from my vault at Gringotts,” Samantha said staring him in the face.

He nodded accepting the offer. He wrapped the case in gold paper and placed a perfect red bow on it. Samantha wrote her name on the bill along with her vault number.

“Miss Brooks, of vault number ten four eight, I thank you for your business. Have a most splendid evening.”

Samantha joined the Weasleys who were still inspecting the goods. Sirius had a hold on James obviously doing his best to prevent an incident.

“Did you find something?” Sirius asked.

“Yes, I did,” Samantha replied. “I think he will like it.”

They finished their shopping and headed to the Leaky Cauldron for lunch. They found Ron and Hermione sitting at a table watching the spectacle. All sorts of people either listening intently or asking questions surrounded Harry. Samantha had to giggle at the sight. Her father had always avoided the notice of people and now he was the center of attention.

“What happened?” Samantha asked Hermione.

“Well, after a few shops, people figured out who he was,” Hermione explained. “He did his best, but that scar gives him away. After word got out that he was here, the crowd was impossible.”

“Harry decided he would just come here and let us shop in peace,” Ron added taking a drink from his mug.

Upon seeing the children enter, Harry began the delicate process of getting away from the avid group who were surrounding him. Many minutes passed before he was finally able to join the others for lunch.

“I had forgotten what it would be like,” Harry said shaking his head. “And I thought the students were bad.”

They ate their lunch discussing whatever came into their heads. James and Lily pressed their parents for information on their gifts, but they wouldn’t give in. After lunch, everyone returned home. Snow had begun falling outside creating a beautiful winter scene. The afternoon was spent decorating the house and the children helped when they weren’t having snowball fights.

Christmas morning arrived with the sun shining in the window upon Samantha’s face. Lily was still asleep in her bed and no sounds could be heard in the hallway. She lay on her mattress wrapped in blankets thinking about what the day held for her. She opened her locket and looked upon her mother’s face. A small tear escaped the corner of her eye. She wished her mother a happy Christmas and closed the locket while wiping the tear from her face.

Over the next two hours the quiet home of Ron and Hermione Weasley became a loud and raucous home with people everywhere. Ginny was the first to arrive with an armload of presents. Bill and Fleur were next with their two kids, Amarante and Ormond who were younger than James by a few years. Charlie was next to show up followed closely by Arthur and Molly who needed help with all the gifts they were carrying. It was nearing nine o’clock and the children were getting restless waiting to open presents.

“Where are those two,” Molly said stomping her foot. “Even now they cause me frustration.”

No sooner had she finished her complaint than the twins appeared with a crack in the living room. The younger kids happily accepted the candies and treats Fred and George offered while pulling them over to the tree.

“Now that we are all here,” Hermione began giving the twins a dirty look, which they returned in good humor. “We can open presents before the children explode.”

Wrapping paper and bows flew around the room as gifts were opened and their givers were thanked. Hermione was most grateful to her children and Samantha for the book. Ron enjoyed his quidditch gifts but was very skeptical about the creams the twins gave him. Harry was so happy to receive another Weasley sweater. Molly had become a master at knitting them and the craftsmanship showed. Arthur nearly fell out of his seat when he opened his gift from Harry and Samantha.

“A yard gnome and some plugs!” He exclaimed. “Oh, thank you very much.”

Samantha urged Harry to open his gift from her. Once the paper had been removed, Harry was speechless. Ron looked on with interest as well. He had recognized the name on the case.

“Thank you so much, Samantha,” Harry said fighting tears. “I love it.”

“Glad you like it,” Samantha said pleased with herself. “I wanted to give you something special this year.”

“Well, you did, Honey. Now I think there is one more for you under there.”

Samantha found a long skinny package wrapped in red paper with green ribbons. She ripped off the covering to reveal a highly polished rosewood case with gold inlays. The latch was gold as well reflecting the firelight. Samantha looked at her father for some explanation and she was met by a rather sad expression.

“It was your mother’s wand case, my dear,” Harry said trying to brighten his mood. Molly, Hermione, and Ginny were watching the

two while the other Weasleys were busy discussing the possibilities of the set of Weasley Fireworks James had just opened. "Go ahead and open it," Harry pushed.

Samantha released the latch and found a wand nestled inside the case. It was about ten inches long made of willow. The lid of the case sported an inscription. Samantha read the writing, *"To my darling wife on the day of the birth of our first child. I love you very much."* Tears formed in the corners of her eyes as she looked over the wand and case again. Her attention was drawn upwards when she heard a snuffle come from Molly and she saw that Harry was watching her very closely.

"I hope you like it," he said. "Your mother would have wanted you to have it."

"I love it, Daddy," said Samantha getting up and hugging her father tightly. "I absolutely love it. Thank you very much."

The day continued on with a large Christmas dinner. Between Hermione, Molly, and Ginny the food was the best Harry had eaten in many years. Samantha found it very hard not to accept seconds when they made the rounds. Although the third time she declined, the Weasley men finished off most of the food. Desserts were delayed until later in the day because everyone was still full from dinner. No one left until late at night. If it wasn't Wizard chess or Gobstones, it was Exploding Snap. Everyone went to sleep that night with ease.

Before anyone had time to get bored being at home too long, the students found themselves on the train back to Hogwarts. Alex and Mira joined Samantha and Sirius in a compartment. They exchanged their stories of Christmas and gifts.

"What did you get, Samantha," Alex asked after putting away her broom servicing kit.

"My dad gave me my mum's wand and case," Samantha said doing her best to avoid crying.

“How nice of your father,” said a drawling voice. “Too poor to buy you something new so he gives you something he had lying around the house.”

“Be gone, git,” snapped Alex.

“You really are a hateful troll, aren’t you?” Said Mira, quite angry.

“I am warning you Malfoy,” Sirius said refusing the urge to punch Malfoy right in the face.

“Save it Weasley, and mind your women,” Malfoy said ignoring their threats. “What, haven’t got anything to say for yourself?”

Samantha closed her eyes pushing the sadness deep down inside. She turned to Malfoy biting her lip. “You would do well to avoid speaking of my family. You wouldn’t want to end up unconscious in the infirmary again, would you?”

Malfoy couldn’t believe what he had just heard. “It will be you in the hospital next time, if you are lucky.”

“I have never been afraid of hopeless gits like yourself,” Samantha said coolly. “I suggest you leave before this gets out of hand.”

“Maybe we should just see who the better wizard is right now,” said Malfoy pulling his wand from his cloak.

Samantha had hers out and pointed at Malfoy’s head before he even managed to free his. “If this was for real, twit, you would already be on the ground. Now, away with you and never talk to me again!”

Sirius had joined Samantha with his wand drawn aimed at the other members of Malfoy’s crew. As the sting of defeat bored into his head, Malfoy decided to leave giving them a smirk as he turned and walked away.

Sirius closed the door to the compartment and latched it. “Next time, I may not let him go that easily,” said Sirius.

“You will have to get in line,” said Alex. “How dare he insult you like that, Samantha.”

“I am not worried about him,” Samantha said shaking her head. “He has never attacked me fairly and when I confront him, he runs away. He has no confidence in his skills so he hides behind his name and insults.”

### **13. Evil And Justice**

January was mostly a blur at Hogwarts. Classes started piling on the work leaving most students working late into the evenings to keep up. Defense had also become more difficult. Harry had begun pairing students off, based on their abilities, to practice the spells and techniques they were learning. Samantha and Sirius were the best in their class so they were always a team. Potions was more of the same. Snape was surly and quick to fail assignments. Samantha was the only Gryffindor to avoid the worst of his abuse simply because she succeeded in class more often than not.

When Samantha wasn't in class or at quidditch practice, which happened three times a week, she was either tutoring her friends or being tutored. February was upon them as was the next quidditch match, Gryffindor versus Ravenclaw.

"Come on, Samantha," Sirius pleaded. "Just concentrate and transfigure your owl into a tea set."

Edrea had a scared look on her face even though it isn't easy to notice on an owl. Samantha had failed the last eight times to complete the spell properly. The ninth wasn't any better.

"Ah, I give up for the night," signed Samantha throwing her arms up. "I just can't concentrate on this right now. We have the match tomorrow and they are a scoring team. I can't take too long getting the snitch or we might give up too many points."

"I am not worried about them or their scoring abilities," said Sirius staring right at Samantha while returning Edrea to normal. "I am worried about you getting this spell down. We are going to build off of it for the next month in class so you have to know it."

"I know Sirius, I know," Samantha said. "Can we work on it after the match tomorrow?"

"I guess so, but you had better get to sleep soon or you won't be much good at that either."

The morning came after Samantha tossed and turned for many hours. She was far from rested as Alex dragged her down for breakfast. The food barely made it off the plate as Samantha continued her ritual of pushing it around until she had to go. The cold frigid air bit into the players as the whistle blew.

“Weasley with the quaffle. Passes to Willows, now Miller, now back to Willows. Shot blocked by Hermanson. Simms with the ball racing to the other end. Passes to Roberts, now to Wheeler. Weasley with a great bludger shot freeing the quaffle. Other Weasley with the ball. Willows, Miller, Willows score! Ten nothing Gryffindor.”

Samantha kept flying around the pitch searching for the snitch, as did Warrick Miller of Ravenclaw. The game proceeded with Lily scoring for Gryffindor, but the coordinated Ravenclaw front had managed to sneak three goals past Stevenson with some excellent plays. The need to get the snitch was mounting. Samantha could feel the tension in the Gryffindor stands every time she flew past them. In practice, the team had worked on stopping the run they knew Ravenclaw was capable of building. Only after an unsuccessful attempt on goal did Samantha see a glint on the far side of the field.

She lowered herself to her broom and shot straight for it cutting off her own team in their latest push towards the goal. Miller took notice of her disruption and raced to the same area Samantha was targeting. The crowd took a collective gasp as she pulled up on the Firebolt a mere three feet above the ground. Miller had to tuck and roll to his left to avoid running into Samantha. The last thing she saw was her teammates running to join her before she was carried off the field to ecstatic chants of victory. The afternoon was spent in the common room warming up and celebrating a close victory against the strongest offensive team at Hogwarts.

Samantha spent the evening keeping her deal with Sirius. They worked on Transfiguration after dinner. She had noticed her father had been absent from the meal, and Dumbledore lacked his usual smile at meal times. Samantha had managed to perfect the spell with Sirius's help before they went to bed. A slight nagging in the back of her head was the only distraction Samantha had to falling asleep.



A rush of fear, anger, and despair entered the pleasant image of a grassy field Samantha was dreaming about. A dark cloaked figure hovered above the tall grass and floated down the hill and in its wake only blackness remained. Dread was the only emotion Samantha had in her mind when she awoke with a start. The sun had just begun to rise causing the darkness of night to give way to the warmth of morning. There was no chance of getting back to sleep now so Samantha got dressed and headed down to the common room to avoid waking anyone else.

In the faint light, Samantha could make out a small figure standing in the center of the room adjusting the pillows in a chair.

"Excuse me," Samantha spoke softly. "Can I help you?"

"It is I who should be excused, Miss," said the creature. "Would you be Miss Potter?"

Samantha quickly looked around searching for anyone else who could have heard the creature.

"I am sorry, ma'am, Miss Brooks is it? I am Dobby the house elf of the Great Harry Potter. Harry Potter sent me to find you and ask you to come to his office, Miss."

"Dobby?" Samantha asked stunned that she now had a face to put to the name. "Why couldn't he come for me himself?"

"Sir wished to be discrete and Dobby is more than willing to help Harry Potter in anyway he can. Dobby owes Harry Potter more than he could ever repay."

"I need to get someone to go with me, Dobby," Samantha explained remembering what her father had made her promise him. "I will only be a few minutes."

"Dobby can accompany you, Miss."

"Alright, Dobby. I accept your offer."

Upon hearing this the house elf's ears dropped a little and his face blushed slightly. Samantha walked to her father's office in the company of Dobby. Harry opened the door allowing both individuals to enter. Samantha took a seat in the front of the classroom.

"Thank you Dobby," said Harry. "You have been a great help."

"Thank you, Sir. If there is anything else you need, please ask." Dobby bowed low and disappeared with a snap of his fingers.

"Samantha, I have something to tell you that might scare you, but you can ask me anything you need answered." Samantha stared at her father not really wanting to know the news she was about to hear. "I am sure you felt my dream this morning." Samantha nodded. "I believe that Voldemort's remaining forces have reformed. This hasn't been confirmed, but I usually know more about this than anyone else. I have alerted certain people concerning my beliefs and they are doing everything they can to find out. Do you have any questions?"

Samantha sat in her chair thinking over what this could mean. A group concerned only with evil, which had tried to kill her father more times than one could count, might have organized again. "Are we going into hiding again?"

"No," Harry said surprised by the question. "I do not see how that will help us here and I will not put you through that again."

"Are you going to search for them yourself?"

"I will not seek them out on my own," Harry responded. "If they are found, I will help fight them, but I will not lead the search."

"What am I to do now?" Samantha asked trying to avoid thinking about the worst possible outcomes.

"Right now, do what you have been doing. Stay in groups, never alone. If they are back, we will decide on what to do then. If anything happens, you will be taken care of either way. The Weasleys will care for you if something happens to me."

Samantha broke down on those words. The thought of losing her father was too much for her to handle. She sobbed openly as Harry wrapped her in a protective hug. He let her cry until she couldn't cry anymore.

"I know this is too much right now, but we will take this one step at a time. Do not get ahead of yourself."

The family spent the next hour discussing all possibilities and their affects. Only when voices could be heard outside did Samantha excuse herself to breakfast. She snuck out of Harry's office waiting for the right moment. Harry maintained a safe distance keeping her in sight until she had joined her friends in the Great Hall.

"Where were you?" Alex asked.

"I had some things to take care of this morning," Samantha answered. "I will tell you later."

Her friends waited patiently until late in the night before they asked about her morning absence. The common room was empty except for the four of them and a low fire.

"What is it, Samantha?" Sirius asked.

"My father thinks that the Death Eaters have reformed," Samantha explained. Alex and Mira both flinched at the thought. Sirius could only attempt to hide his feelings about the prospect. "He isn't sure yet, but it seems like it is happening."

"What is happening to stop it?" Asked Alex.

"Does this mean we will have another war?" Cried Mira.

Samantha only shrugged at their questions not having an answer.

"Are you in danger, too?" Asked Sirius.

"Not right now, but there is a chance I could be," Samantha replied grateful that he was concerned her safety. "I don't know any more than that, but we need to be more careful than we have been."

The week leading up to Valentine's Day and the next Hogsmeade visit was stressful. Homework levels had increased again and Snape seemed to have made it his personal mission in life to ruin everyone's week.

"I can't believe he assigned another paper this week," Mira complained. "I still haven't finished the other two and when am I supposed to write this one?"

"I don't know, Mira," said Alex in disgust. "I am in the same boat as you. But I don't want to think about it right now. Has anyone asked you to Hogsmeade yet?"

"No," said Mira. "But that is fine by me. I would much rather go with you guys than deal with someone this week."

"Me too," agreed Alex. "How about you two?"

"Nope," said Sirius finishing his Potions essay.

"I don't have any plans either," Samantha concurred. "Just want to hang out that day then?"

"Sounds good," the three said in unison.

Valentine's Day came and the sky was overcast. The students filed out of the castle after breakfast heading down the hill into town. The older students were in pairs holding hands or stealing kisses on their way. Some shops had been decorated for the holiday, but others seemed to resist the coercion. The Weasleys' store was decidedly against the Valentine celebration. In their window every few minutes, a large red heart would be pummeled by a mountain troll. Many students found the humor in the display while a few sensitive ones didn't.

As noon came around, the group found themselves finishing their butterbeers in the Three Broomsticks. As they left the inn, they decide to head back since all the sappy students were beginning to sicken them. It was the sudden pop of apparating wizards that caught their attention. Only on the first scream did anyone take notice that ten robed figures had descended on the small village.

Since they had brunch, Harry and Hermione were sitting with Dumbledore in his office having early tea. They were discussing the events of the week. Harry and Dumbledore were laughing about how James had been caught getting revenge on Peeves for something he had done to another second year Gryffindor.

"I don't see the humor in him casting a whirlwind charm on one of the ghosts," Hermione complained. "What if one of the students happened to get sucked into it?"

"But Hermione," Harry said between chuckles. "They didn't and Peeves got..."

"Got what Harry?" Said Hermione tersely.

The look of fear and panic on Harry's face caused even Dumbledore some anxiety. The mood in the room changed from happiness to absolute terror. Even though the windows were closed, a bitter chill swept through the office.

"Harry, what is it?" Hermione asked scared of what the answer could be. She remembered what happened when Harry looked like this.

"Samantha. No, not Samantha!" Harry jumped out of his chair sending the teacup flying across the room shattering when it struck the floor. He turned to run for the door drawing his wand. Before he took more than half a dozen steps, he disappeared without a sound.

"Albus," cried Hermione. "What is going on?"

The old man's face was drawn into deep concentration. "The village!" Dumbledore turned to Fawkes perch while pointing Hermione to the fireplace. "Fawkes, go to Hogsmeade now and..." But Dumbledore never finished his sentence because Fawkes was no longer on his perch. "Floo powder to the Three Broomsticks, now!"

Harry appeared across the street from the Three Broomsticks. He saw a few people running past him and students cowering anywhere they could. A few fifth and sixth year Gryffindors were huddled behind a row of barrels and a clutch of Ravenclaws were tucked in a relief beside one of the buildings. Flames could be seen devouring the roof

of the post office. Owls were pouring out into the grey sky. A group of four robed figures were advancing up the street towards Harry. Harry turned to face them, but another scene caught his eye stopping his actions instantly.

On the ground no more than a dozen feet in front of him, laid a crumpled body of a student. Behind the student crouched three others, Sirius, Mira, and Alex. Harry lost himself in the thoughts of his baby being injured or worse. Regaining control of his legs, Harry sprinted to his daughter's side. As he knelt beside her, the door of the Three Broomsticks opened and Albus and Hermione emerged.

"Samantha!" Harry screamed grabbing her shoulders turning her so he could see her face. A gash above her left eye was bleeding and she didn't make a sound when moved. "Samantha! Nooooo!" As Harry was grappling with the image of his baby's limp body lying on the ground, a small rumble could be heard. A light silver mist and a low cloud of dust rose from around Harry building in size. The robed figures hastened their advance on Harry, their numbers swelling to seven strong.

Hermione moved toward Harry, but Dumbledore held her back. Sirius was fighting against Alex and Mira trying to rush to Samantha's side and protect her. At this moment the cloud of dust and mist broke from its invisible confine. The silver mist expanded in all directions leaving dust in its wake. Sirius, Mira, and Alex were the first to be overtaken by it. They were knocked to their feet instantly. Dumbledore and Hermione were next and they met the same fate. Windows nearest the epicenter rattled in their sills.

Other students who had sought shelter nearer to the Three Broomsticks were knocked to their feet as well. When the group of Death Eaters was overtaken, the results were far more catastrophic than they were closer to Harry. The group of seven were scattered in all directions. One was sent into the wall of a building, cracking the exterior, and collapsing with only a sickening crunch. Three others were thrown back down the street like rag dolls. The lead member hit the ground with such force that the position he landed in looked similar to a bag of garbage dropped from a fast moving broom. The last two were further away and had time to prepare for the brunt of

the spell, but they were still cast aside like small children. Two other Death Eaters lay unconscious a distance down the street. When the wave reached them, they merely tumbled further down the street.

As the wave traveled through the village, a door to a shed that had been left open was obliterated and shards of wood pelted the nearby buildings. Windows exploded sending glass and small debris in all directions away from the wave. Harry settled his baby lightly and rose to his feet. He made for the group of Death Eaters struggling to get to their feet. Hermione helped Dumbledore to his feet in time for them to see Harry hurry down the road. Harry's eyes raged with anger that Hermione hadn't seen for so many years. It seemed as if flames were burned in them.

Fawkes swooped down from overhead landing in front of Samantha as if protecting her from any more attacks. Harry flicked his wand over his head and a solid golden dome appeared over Samantha's lifeless form. The shield was so thick that Samantha and Fawkes looked like they were being viewed through the bottom of a thick glass. Another golden shield, though not as durable, surrounded Sirius, Alex, and Mira.

The first Death Eater to regain his footing was struck across the head by a deep blue spell sent from Harry's outstretched wand. The victim collapsed without a sound being muttered. Two others got to their feet in time to send a stunner and a burst of purple at Harry. With one wave of his wand, the spells were deflected and he returned with a yellow streamer striking both in the chest. One Death Eater seemed to try and disapparate, but only when he found he couldn't did he choose to attack. Harry heard the curse as it was cast. The killing curse shot towards him as Harry tucked into a roll and struck him with a light orange bolt of light dropping him to his knees in pain. The killing curse continued until it struck the golden shield surrounding Samantha. Fawkes spread his wings but did not move otherwise. The shield deflected the errant curse slightly as a deep sound was emitted. The largest bell in all of London couldn't have equaled the noise.

The last Death Eater was the slowest in getting to his feet. The figure turned, wand at the ready, sending the killing curse at Harry. He expected this attack and sidestepped the green flash drawing his

wand even with the Death Eaters head. The disarming charm was cast and successfully removed the weapon from the last attacker. Harry flicked his wand again pushing the person up against the wall of another building missing its windows. Upon hitting the structure, the hood fell uncovering the face of Bellatrix Lestrange.

Harry was deluged by more anger and hate. The death of his godfather was first. Sirius's arched back as he flew through the veil in the Department of Mysteries. The lifeless body of his wife lying in a street. The broken image of Percy Weasley when he was found dead. The Longbottoms still in St. Mungo's not recognizing their own son. And the countless others she had killed in the name of evil.

"Bellatrix!" Harry growled.

"Yes, Potter," Bellatrix said hesitating as she fought the pain from Harry's attacks. "Been looking for me long, boy?"

"Nearly two decades, but I finally caught you. You will pay for what you have done."

"Ha," Bellatrix scoffed. "I have heard that before, Potter, but it never seems to happen."

"I assure you this time, you will be held accountable." Harry was barely able to control his anger as he struggled with the thought of killing her. "Getting the group back together I see. You wouldn't be trying to bring Tom back now would you?"

"My lord is dead, Potter," Bellatrix said with a smirk. "Surely you remember killing him don't you?"

"I do remember, but he was always the one who said he could never die."

"Maybe, you should cower in the school a little while longer then," said Bellatrix grasping for breath. "Let more people die while you hide from your past."

"I will not allow you to kill anyone else!" Harry said as if making up his mind.



While Harry was holding Bellatrix against a wall, Fred and George came out of their windowless store. They saw the bodies of Death Eaters strewn around the street. A few buildings had been damaged and the flames of the post office spewed dark smoke into the air. They saw Sirius encased in a golden orb along with his friends. Hermione was rushing to them with her cloak billowing behind her as she ran. Dumbledore was advancing on Harry wearing a very serious look.

Hermione asked the three friends if they were OK, but they were concerned about Samantha who was still not moving. She rushed over to the sphere protecting Samantha. Fawkes had not moved from his position between her and the attackers. Hermione kept a safe distance from the orb not knowing what would happen if she got too close.

As Fred and George looked at Harry, they saw someone they had sworn a painful death to years before. The twins hurried forward to join Harry their wands drawn. "Let us at her, Harry," yelled Fred. "She will die today!"

"We do not require any more revenges to be carried out, gentleman," said Dumbledore as he joined the group. "Do you remember the promise you made to me, Harry? You have succeeded in your quest and now she can be punished for what she has done. Do not continue down that path anymore. You know what lies there."

Harry stood there resisting the urge to kill this hateful woman. She had caused so much pain for so many people. "She needs to die. She has to die. So much suffering because of her. The blood of so many is still wet on her hands."

"I know this, Harry," Dumbledore sighed. "She will pay for her crimes, but you must let it go. Do not become her."

Numerous cracks could be heard around the village, as a force of aurors appeared ready to do battle. The reaction from the newcomers was the same as the students scattered about the village, total surprise. Half of the town bore marks from the battle. Death Eater bodies were everywhere. A moment's shock receded and they began the task of gathering the prisoners and putting out the raging fire.

Arthur Weasley was part of the last group to appear. Among him were obviously members of the press.

Arthur could hear Dumbledore talking Harry down as Kingsley and Tonks waited to arrest Bellatrix. "Harry, please let Kingsley and Tonks handle this," Arthur pleaded.

As the number of people increased, Harry began to calm. His anger was still sharp, but it had subsided some. "Fine, I won't kill her, but you owe me," Harry said quickly releasing his bind on her, but shooting a light green jet into her chest causing her to drop to the ground and convulse slightly.

"What was that?" Asked Tonks as she and Kingsley took possession of the defeated witch.

"Think of it as a Dementor in a spell," Harry said as a smile escaped. "She is in her own private hell right now."

## 14. A Secret

Dumbledore was the only one who seemed to have understood what Harry meant. "Harry, I believe Samantha needs you right now. We will take care of this."

Hermione was looking through the shield searching for any signs of movement. Fawkes adjusted his footing slightly as Harry strode quickly back to his daughter. When he was within a few feet, he waved his wand and both golden spheres faded away. He knelt beside her checking for a pulse and upon finding one he let out his collected breath.

"She is still alive," Harry simpered, fighting the tears clutching her hand. "Fawkes, to the infirmary, now."

Fawkes jumped upon Samantha's side and with a burst of flame the three of them vanished. Madam Quince was staring out of the window eyeing the smoke rising from Hogsmeade when she heard the sudden presence of a ball of flame. She turned to find Samantha lying in a bed with Harry holding her onto her hand daring not to let go. Fawkes took flight and soared around the room settling on the head rail of Samantha's bed.

"What happened?" Cried Madam Quince as she rushed to the fallen student.

"I do not know," Harry replied fearing the worse. "There were Death Eaters, but I can't describe what she was hit with. Can you help her?"

"I will do what I can, but until I know what she was hit by, it will be guesswork."

The minutes passed as Madam Quince worked on Samantha. Harry refused to give in to the images of his baby dying. When the doors to the hospital wing opened, Harry hardly took notice. Only when Hermione's hand came to rest on his shoulder, did Harry look upon the visitors.

"Madam Quince," Dumbledore began. "From the reports, I believe she was hit by the Sopio curse."

Madam Quince nodded and changed the treatment she was performing. Sirius, Alex, and Mira were also in the room. They still looked scared and frightened by the incident, but they wouldn't look Harry in the eyes. They had never seen a rage like that from Harry's eyes as he had risen from Samantha's body.

"Mr. Weasley, would you tell us what happened in the village?" No trace of concern remained on Dumbledore's face.

"Sir," Sirius started to explain. "We had just left the Three Broomsticks and were heading back to the castle to finish some work when they started appearing around town. There were ten of them by the time they stop showing up. Two of them began attacking us since we were standing on the road. Samantha ran ahead of us and when we tried to join her she cast her shield charm on us." Alex and Mira nodded as Sirius continued his description. "Samantha fought with the two Death Eaters. She knocked one down with that Evinco Charm and the other dodged it. He managed to shoot the Avada Kedavra curse at her.

"Thankfully she avoided that too and hit him with a bright white spell. It was then that three others attacked hitting her with the blue jet. She didn't get up after that. It was then that Professor Potter appeared and ran to her. The phoenix landed near her as if he was protecting her. And you know the rest from there, sir."

"Thank you, Sirius," Dumbledore said. "Do either of you have anything to add?"

"No, Sir," Alex and Mira stated at the same time.

"Very well," said the old headmaster. "I would tell you to go back to your house, but I do not believe you would listen. Please sit and stay out of the way."

The group of friends sat on an empty bed watching their injured friend. Mira was replaying the scene in her head and she just couldn't get over the despair that the attack left in her. Alex was looking on as Harry lightly rubbed Samantha's hand as if calming her. A noise was growing in the hallway and Hermione directed her gaze towards the doors not hiding her annoyance.

Arthur Weasley entered the room followed by Kingsley and a group of anxious reporters. Arthur raised his hand quieting them instantly. "You will wait outside until I have time to speak with you."

At the sound of their protests, Hermione left Harry's side. "Get out now!" Said Hermione as sternly as she could. "Do not make me remove you."

The group of reporters left the room under the angry stare of Hermione but not without taking notice of Harry sitting by Samantha's bed caring for her. Once the doors closed, Kingsley took up a position just inside the doors as if he was a guard. Arthur walked over to Hermione and asked about Samantha's condition. After learning of it, he spoke to Harry.

"Harry, everything has been taken care of," Arthur explained. "Those Death Eaters will not be free again I assure you of that."

Harry barely registered what Arthur had said when a splitting pain seared across his forehead. The pain blinded him for a few seconds and then subsided. Albus, Arthur, and Hermione gasped at Harry's reaction, but the children only sat not knowing what to do.

"He is back," Harry said with an aura of prediction to his voice. "He is mad about their failure today."

"I fear our suspicions have been warranted, Minister," Dumbledore said with a tired frown. "How strong is he, Harry?"

"Not very, maybe no more than a strong spirit like before."

"I will set our plans in motion, Albus," Arthur announced. "We will not be unprepared this time." Arthur turned and left the room. The noise outside in the hall rose to a fever pitch before silencing completely.

Minutes ticked by as Madam Quince worked on Samantha. She was trying to counter the curse before any permanent damage could be done. The cut above Samantha's eye had been healed leaving behind only a slight reddish mark.

“How did he disappear from your office, Albus?” Asked Hermione. “It was as if he...”

“Disapparated.” Dumbledore said calmly. “Yes, he did just that.”

“But how,” Hermione questioned. “No one can apparate inside Hogwarts.”

“Ah,” Dumbledore began. “That is the accepted rule, but it is not completely accurate.” Hermione was beside herself. A fact she had held true her entire magical life was being refuted. “A little known ability every headmaster has possessed since the days of Godric himself. When you are made the headmaster of Hogwarts, you are no longer bound by the anti-apparation charm that protects this school. It would appear that another exception might have also been made. The charm might allow someone to disappear when his or her needs are true in heart and the purpose is for a good cause, but I cannot say for sure since many of the mysteries of this castle are still unknown to me.”

Hermione seemed to take the news well considering a tenet she had fatefully believed in was now destroyed. “Well then,” Hermione stammered. “What about Fawkes’s behavior?”

“It is commonly believed that Fawkes is my pet,” Dumbledore said with a smile. “The truth be known, I have merely been Fawkes’s companion until his real owner was ready for him. It appears that Fawkes has decided Harry is ready. I will miss the companionship.” The silence in the room was deafening. Harry looked at Fawkes in utter amazement. Hermione was dumbstruck as well. With a small sniff, Dumbledore turned and left the room.

Fawkes remained watching over Samantha as her legs began to move slowly. The mood of shock and fear gave way to hope and flashes of happiness. It was evening before Samantha opened her eyes. Above her head, a crimson-bodied bird sat staring at her almost glowing in the pale light of the room. The golden tail feathers encircled her pillow creating an almost shrine-like structure. Samantha felt no fear and was almost at peace with the world when she felt a hand gripping hers tightly. Her father sat in a chair watching

his daughter look at the beautiful creature. She looked around the room and sighed, "I hate this room."

"So did I when I was your age," Harry said softly. "This is Fawkes, Honey. He helped protect you today and I am sure he assisted in your recovery as well."

"He is so pretty, dad," Samantha cooed. "But isn't he Dumbledore's?"

"We haven't figured that out yet, but I will let you know when we do." Harry paused giving himself time to sort out his questions. "Do you remember what happened?"

Samantha told her father what had happened. The account was the same as the one Sirius had given. Samantha took the news of Voldemort's probable return better than Harry had expected. Only when her friends returned from dinner did Samantha feel guilty of the day's events.

"You are awake," squeaked Mira as she ran over and hugged Samantha trying to hide her head and avoid eye contact. Alex was the next one to show her concern giving Samantha a hug as well. Sirius stood back not wanting to get emotional, but Samantha pulled him into a hug as well.

"You won't believe the questions people are asking us or the rumors they have dreamed up," Alex said scoffing at the thought of them. "Even those who were there didn't have things straight."

"Talk about it or don't, it doesn't matter," Harry said to the group. He gave his daughter a quick hug before standing up. "Samantha, you are cleared to leave the hospital when you feel up to it."

"Good," said a relieved Samantha. "I am tired of spending time here."

"I know the feeling," Harry said. "Kingsley will accompany you back to the common room."

"I don't need a protector, Dad," Samantha stated not liking the fact that she had just been given a minder. "I can take care of myself."

"This was not my idea, Honey," Harry admitted. "Professor Dumbledore and Minister Weasley arranged the guard. They refused to hear out my complaints so take it up with them if you would like."

"If I see them, I will do just that, Father." Samantha had a defiant look on her face. She was used to being hidden from all the attention not the center of it. "Let's go," Samantha told her friends as she was getting out of bed. "I have work to get done for this week."

"You will need more than luck to get anything done," Sirius said sighing. "I doubt you will be left alone for a few weeks. It is all anyone is talking about."

"We will see about that," said a still defiant Samantha.

As they walked back to the common room, anyone they passed in the hallway stopped and stared at Samantha. Once she entered the common room, all talking ceased instantly. Everyone was hesitant to move or speak until Samantha went up to her room to fetch her books. When she joined her friends at a table and began working on her assignments, her teammates came over for a visit. They asked about what had happened and Mark could only laugh.

"I knew what Stuart had said wasn't true," Mark shook his head. "There was never a dragon. What a git."

The night continued on with more Gryffindors asking about the battle. There were a few wild stories. One involved Dementors while another seemed to refer to vampires. Samantha's friends did their best to shield her from some of the more annoying stories, but she heard them nonetheless.

When morning came, a copy of the Daily Prophet was sitting on her nightstand accompanied by a letter. Samantha opened the letter and read it.

*Samantha,*

*I am sorry about all of this. Everyone will know within a few hours of when you read this. Sadly, you will see what it is like to be a Potter and have to live with all of the stories.*



*I am sorry, Honey.*

Samantha unrolled the paper and nearly passed out.

*“Death Eaters Attack Hogsmeade.*

*“A report of ten Death Eaters attacked the village of Hogsmeade yesterday afternoon. Some damage was done, but no innocents were hurt severely. One Samantha Brooks, student, reportedly fought off two Death Eaters, before being knocked down.”*

The article continued giving a blow-by-blow account of the battle and destruction. They captured Harry’s appearance and subsequent attack on the remaining Death Eaters. The next article is what caused Samantha the most distress.

*“Samantha Brooks, Really A Potter.*

*“Samantha Brooks, the student who fought to protect her friends from the attack by evil forces, seems similar to none other than Harry Potter himself. Harry was seen yelling her name in the village before he successfully defeated seven Death Eaters. He was also seen holding her hand while she was being treated for her injuries at Hogwarts. An investigation revealed that her mother was killed in Africa in an attack led by Bellatrix Lestrage, captured Death Eater. Further information has only lent to the belief that she could only be the daughter of Harry Potter, the-boy-who-lived.*

*“All attempts to confirm this story have went unanswered by Professor Potter and Headmaster Albus Dumbledore. Minister Weasley would only say that he couldn’t comment on our story at that time.”*

“No,” yelled Samantha. “Not now.”

Alex and Mira jumped out of bed while Rachel raised herself up on her elbow. Alex asked Samantha what was wrong. She held the paper out and the three women read the articles.

“They know,” Samantha cried in her hands. “Everybody knows now.”

"You knew this would happen," Alex said trying to sooth Samantha. "Just do what you would do regardless of people knowing who you are. There is nothing you can do about it now, so make the best of it."

Rachel was shocked to hear what was said. Alex explained the situation to her roommate and after a few minutes, she understood the reasons behind the cover-up.

"We worked so hard to hide it and now everyone knows," Samantha sobbed as she pounded her fists into her bed.

"Come on, Samantha," Alex urged her. "Let's just get going and forget about all of this."

After Samantha decided she should listen to her friends, they got ready and headed down to the common room where no one seemed to know about the story yet. Sirius was waiting for them by the exit. After they left the common room, Samantha handed Sirius the paper and told him to read it. Mr. Marrows was waiting on the other side of the portrait hidden near a pillar. He fell into step behind the group trying not to be noticed. Samantha, having noticed him following her, sighed at the realization that she was going to be followed for a while. On the journey to the Great Hall, Sirius read the articles swearing every now and then. The hall fell mostly quiet when Samantha entered. It was obvious that some people here had read the story.

The only people who would sit with Samantha were her friends and the quidditch team. They didn't seem to care about the story or at least they didn't let it bother them. They talked and joked as best they could until they had to get to their classes. As she walked to Herbology, Samantha noticed everyone turned and looked at her. Alex, in an attempt to defend her friend, returned the favor by giving menacing looks and Sirius was poised ready for a fight. Class carried on with minor annoyances. Professor Longbottom avoided asking Samantha any questions or drawing more attention to her. When class was called, he smiled at her as she left the greenhouse.

Defense class was more interesting than it had been at any other time that year. Samantha found that being in the same room with her father was actually a blessing even if a few people had noticed that an auror had followed her in to the room. Before class started,

everyone had their turn staring at Samantha and then at her father trying to see the similarities. Once everyone had made up their minds about Samantha's identity, all eyes were on Harry. The article in the Daily Prophet had very detailed descriptions of the fight proving to all that Harry knew what he was teaching and many of the stories they had heard weren't false. Her housemates whispered between themselves discussing the article. Only the Slytherins hid their opinions about the events. Some of them had known the captured Death Eaters and didn't dare say a word for fear of retribution.

Harry continued with class ignoring the occasional whisper. The day's topic was defending against multiple attackers. Some people turned to Samantha when the topic was announced. And only when Harry asked Marrows to assist, did the class turn their attention away from Samantha.

"Mr. Marrows will be assisting me for the period," Harry said. "I assure you he is quite skilled so I don't want anyone to hold back for fear of hurting him." Little did Harry know, the class was more worried about angering him and the defensive attack that would most assuredly follow.

Marrows looked at Harry then Samantha and replied, "Thanks, Professor."

"Let us begin," Harry said calling the first person to the front.

Slytherins and Gryffindors alternated taking turns. A few Gryffindors managed to land their very weakened group stunner spell on Marrows. Sirius actually got Harry hard enough to cause a slight delay in class before they continued. Malfoy's attempt was pitiful. His shot was so far off target that Marrows had to drop his shield to avoid deflecting the spell back on the class allowing the spell to harmlessly strike the wall. Alex and Mira did better than most, but Sirius still had the best showing.

"Samantha, you are last," Harry called. The class inhaled as one as the Gryffindors waited to see Samantha show her skills as she did in the village.

“Professor,” Samantha said. “I don’t think I should participate in this exercise.”

“Please, complete the spell that is assigned,” Harry told her.

Samantha looked at the pair readying herself to use the spell. Upon command, she sent the stunner at her father and Marrows. Their shields absorbed some of the spell but not enough. Marrows was knocked down and Harry staggered a bit. The Gryffindors looked on surprised at what she had accomplished.

“Very good, Miss Potter,” Harry said shaking his head. “If there are no more questions, class is dismissed for the day. Please read the next chapter before class.” Harry walked slowly over to his desk and sat down while Marrows pulled himself into another chair.

Samantha urged her friends to hurry out of the classroom. She was going to take advantage of the opportunity to ditch Mr. Marrows. They walked to the Great Hall for lunch noticing that less people stopped talking as Samantha walked by. They ate their lunch and walked slowly down to Potions.

“I hope he isn’t too unbearable towards me,” Samantha said. “He is not exactly a fan of Potters.”

Snape swooped into the classroom wearing a sneer. “We will continue with our work from last time.”

Most of the class Snape hovered around the room spreading fear and tension. Samantha was more aware of his actions now that she would most likely be a direct target of his aggression. As class neared its end, Samantha thought she might get out of the class without an encounter. She was proved wrong as the last 5 minutes ran down.

“Miss Potter,” Snape called from the front. “Would you stay behind when class ends?”

Samantha looked around and saw my faces staring at her. She only nodded accepting his request. The class left and her friends waited in the hallway. Snape loomed over Samantha waiting for the right moment to begin with a look of disgust on his face. “Miss Potter. I

would like to inform you that even though I now know who you really are, I will not treat you differently. Unlike your father, you have shown to be quite capable in this class. I trust that popularity will not go to your head like it did your father.”

“Yes, Professor,” Samantha replied hiding her anger at Snape’s harsh words about her father.

“You are dismissed.” Snape turned and left the dungeon looking more ill-tempered than he had when he entered.

“That was weird,” Samantha told her friends as they walked to Care of Magical Creatures. “I figured on him threatening me or docking points for no reason.”

“I am glad he didn’t do anything this time,” Sirius said. “But we should be really careful of him in the future. I doubt his goodwill will last very long.”

Harry slid around the corner of the doorway and slipped into the potion’s classroom. He cleared his throat and waited for Snape to meet his eyes.

“Wise choice, Severus,” Harry said putting some strength behind his words. “I trust I will not have to remind you to treat her fairly again?”

“And what of it, Potter,” Snape said snidely.

“Is your Dark Mark still visible?” Harry offered. “I could dump you off in the auror office or Azkaban and no one would waste anytime getting all the information they could from you. I rarely make threats, but when it concerns my daughter they are promises. Treat her like you treated me and your life will be an exercise in suffering. Thank you for seeing things my way, Severus.”

Harry turned and left the dungeons never seeing the pained look on Snape’s face. The cause of the look was more carefully hidden. Severus knew he had to heed Harry’s warning. This Harry Potter didn’t hold back anything when his daughter was concerned. He saw the battle in Hogsmeade from a hidden corner. He still had the bump on his head from when he was thrown to his feet. He had used his

strongest shield and still he was thrown ten feet. This Harry Potter fought to win and fought to injure.

Severus swallowed his pride and decided to keep his hatred fixed on the man Harry had become. If he started hating the girl, his life would become very complicated very quickly. He readied himself for the Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws who were next. At least he could vent some of his anger before dinner.

When they left the school, Marrows caught up with them resuming his normal, distant position. They also noticed Tonks wandering around the grounds as if she was looking for something.

“Did you guys know there were two aurors guarding Hogwarts?” Samantha asked the others.

“No, I didn’t,” Sirius replied. “I guess Dumbledore and Grandpa didn’t want to take any chances. Still, we are safe on the grounds. No one would dare attack the school. Almost every teacher was involved in the war and they know how to fight. “

“Regardless,” Mira chimed in. “I don’t like the idea of them being here. It’s just a reminder of last time.” Mira looked down at her feet as they walked through the grass. “I am sorry I didn’t help you, Samantha. I really wanted to, but I just wasn’t fast enough.”

“What?” Samantha asked not believing her ears and coming to a complete stop. “Where did that come from?”

Mira’s gaze shifted everywhere but towards Samantha. “I just wanted to apologize for not helping you and letting you get hurt. If I hadn’t been so surprised, I could have helped you.”

“Miranda,” Samantha said grabbing Mira’s shoulders. “You have nothing to be sorry for. I don’t blame you for anything.” Mira finally looked up at Samantha seeing her look of acceptance. They silently came to an agreement about the situation and Mira showed an embarrassed smile. “If anything, I blame Sirius for what happened.”

Sirius turned staring at Samantha shocked by her comment. Samantha laughed and continued walking to class. Mira joined her

giggling as well. Sirius followed them with his eyes not saying anything as he processed what had just happened. Alex gave a quick laugh and hurried to catch up with the others leaving Sirius alone with his thoughts.

As they joined the other Gryffindors waiting for Hagrid to arrive, Sirius came up to Samantha. "I see your sense of humor hasn't suffered."

"I see your ability to think on your feet has," Samantha said with a big smile as Hagrid began class.

## 15. Into The Face Of Evil

Harry found himself walking to the gates of Hogwarts with one thought on his mind, sorrow. He recalled the conversation from the night before in Dumbledore's office. Kingsley, Arthur, and Dumbledore were explaining today's plans. In gratitude or payment, Harry was going to sit in on Bellatrix's interrogation.

Harry was headed for the Department of Magical Law Enforcement to meet with Kingsley and Tonks who were conducting the 'interview'. Once the anti-apparition wards were behind him, Harry disappeared to the Ministry atrium. As the fountain swam into view, Harry noticed, or was noticed, by some of the people bustling about. Always finding himself the center of attention, Harry proceeded to the guard station to have his wand checked.

After grabbing the wand back from a star-struck guard, Harry continued to the lift. Not more than six feet later, an alarm sounded causing the guard to snap to attention. He hailed Harry and asked him to stop. Harry turned, fixed the guard with a withering stare, and continued on his way to the lift. The guard silenced the alarm and shook his head. Thankfully this lapse in protocol would be easy to get out of since it was *The Harry Potter* after all.

The lift sounded level two, the gates opened, and Harry exited heading for the offices that were down the hall. Once he entered a large room with cubicles scattered about, a friendly face appeared.

"Wotcher, Harry," said a smiling Tonks. Harry smiled his first smile of the day and greeted her back. She was as youthful looking as the first time Harry saw her. 'Must be the metamorphmagus in her,' thought Harry.

They were quickly joined by Kingsley. He was complaining about lazy guards and regulations being ignored. Harry snickered, but said nothing. Kingsley led them back to the lift and pressed the button for level nine. Harry fought the flashbacks of the last time he went to that floor.

Kingsley explained to Harry that Bellatrix was being held in a Department of Mysteries holding cell. The interrogation was going to



be held in one of their rooms as well. Upon asking, Harry learned that Ministry rules regarding prisoners were different when the Department of Mysteries was involved. Certain rights were not enforceable and various techniques were permitted. He explained that this was only permissible considering that the person was already a trial-convicted criminal and an escapee.

Harry was not concerned with the finer points. He only wanted to find out what she knew. His mood darkened and he began putting himself in the proper state-of-mind for what was going to occur. Exiting the lift once more, Harry found himself being led down a familiar hallway, but they turned into a shorter hallway leading to the left that Harry didn't remember existing before. They came to a dead end and Kingsley raised his wand and tapped two stones speaking what had to be a password.

After a few seconds, the wall shimmered and Kingsley walked through the stone barrier. Harry followed and Tonks brought up the rear. They gathered on the other side meeting two individuals who wore dark grey, hooded cloaks covering all identifiable features. The two people stared at the three visitors and one finally spoke.

"Mr. Potter," said a gruff voice. "You have an unverified wand on your person. Present it for documentation, please."

Kingsley and Tonks turned to stare at Harry. It was illegal for wizards to carry more than one wand on their person unless they were certified by the ministry.

Harry stared at the person who spoke to him and responded in a firm, even voice. "Not likely."

Those in the room could tell a battle of wills had been started. The man said one word in response, "Why?"

"My reasons are my own," was the brisk response. "The wand you are asking about is no concern of yours. Now, may we complete our business or is this going to become an issue?"

"Policy dictates...." The man's reply fell short as he apparently met Harry's gaze which was unyielding and had an edge to it. "I will have

to clear this with the head. Please remain where you are and talk to no one.” The man turned and hurried down the only corridor out of the room.

Tonks had an entertained look on her face and Kingsley’s was one of toil. Harry remained stoic and stared down the second man who did his best to appear strong. The silence stretched on and Tonks seemed to be getting restless. She was slightly bouncing on her feet in place obviously holding in her enthusiasm. She was ever the rebel when her life wasn’t at stake.

The man returned and informed them that the issue had been cleared by his superior. He led them down the darkened hall and to the right at a T-intersection. They made a few more turns before coming to a door marked “Interview 4”. They entered and found another robbed figure standing behind a table with an official and accurate Dictation-Quotes quill set, parchment, and ink bottle set up. On the other side of the room sat a woman chained to a chair.

Bellatrix looked worn, weak. She had a vacant look in her eyes and they failed to focus on anything or anyone. The escort took up a position just inside the door which he closed solidly. The other man took a seat in the corner of the room behind and to the right of the table. He said that she had been dosed with veritaserum, but she had proven resistant to the affects. Kingsley, Tonks, and Harry took seats behind the table.

“What were your plans prior to the Hogsmeade attack?” Asked Kingsley.

“The restoration of our Lord,” replied Bellatrix evenly.

“How did you plan to achieve those plans?”

“By following the procedures our Lord left after his first reincarnation.”

“How far along were you in those plans?”

“We were quite well advanced in the process,” Bellatrix wavered. “We only had two steps...”

"Only had two steps, what?"

Bellatrix seemed to fight the potion or another magic was at work in her preventing her from answering. Harry was not finding their progress encouraging.

"Did you like that spell I used in Hogsmeade, Bella?" Asked Harry.

"No," was the prompt response.

"You will answer the question or you will get another chance to experience it." The fire in Harry's eyes returned and he was looking deadly serious.

"We only had two steps left in returning our Lord to his body," forced Bellatrix.

"What are those steps?" Harry took control of the session.

"We..." Harry drew his wand and tapped his left hand with it intently never removing his eyes from Bellatrix. "We need the blood from an enemy, strong enough to be worthy. We also needed our Master's wand to complete the spell."

"The specific wand is the key then?"

"Weaker blood was used and another wand, but the results were inadequate for our Lord. The blood would have been acceptable, but the wand wasn't in tuned with our Lord. Your wand would work, but our Lord wants his wand used."

The last bit was so forced that Harry doubted that the veritaserum would garner much additional information. Another dose was unlikely to work since immunity or brain damage could result from prolonged exposure to the potion.

"Where is your base of operations?" Asked Kingsley sensing the waning control.

"Can't tell."

“Fidelius Charm?”

“Ye...To hell with you Potter!”

“Who are the others associated with you?”

“There are no others, boy.”

Harry stood and glanced to the guard in the corner. “She is at her limit for the potion. Do what you feel is necessary to gain any additional information. All activity is secret and undetectable.”

Harry felt the anger returning and his desire for revenge increasing. He fixed a malevolent gaze on Bellatrix and smirked when she realized that for once she wasn’t in control of the situation.

“You can’t,” she screamed. “You are a goody-goody. You won’t stoop to our levels.”

“Really?” Harry asked giving his best dark look. “You sure of that, bitch?” Bellatrix lips quivered involuntarily. “You should know what I can do. You helped teach me a few things, remember? You pushed me to a breaking point when you killed Allison that day. You killed the mother of my child. Do you really think I won’t do what is needed to stop what you are doing? I am already going to hell for what I have done. What is a little more?”

The mood of the room changed as Harry vented. Kingsley and Tonks looked slightly scared. The chair Bellatrix was sitting in was vibrating. It was a visual indicator that Harry was barely in control of his magic. The Unspeakables in the room seemed anxious, if you could tell without a face to read. Bellatrix went from defiant, to stunned, to wary, to downright worried. She knew what could happen when the rules didn’t apply and no one would dare speak of things best left unsaid.

Harry lifted his wand slightly and pointed it at her foot. He tilted his head a bit and asked, “Names of those involved or we begin. You remember how this works. I have a clear memory of it from last time.”

Bellatrix couldn’t believe that the tables had turned this much since that night all those years ago. She knew some actions were atoned

for during life. Some just couldn't wait until death to be repaid. Her last hope was something she had abandoned all those years ago during Hogwarts, morality.

"You can't, you won't. You couldn't live with yourself. Think of your daughter."

She thought she might have had Harry's weak point with that speech, but her hopes were quickly dispatched along with the cohesion in her left foot.

A mumbled spell from Harry and the bones in her foot were shattered. The sound from the spell working was drowned out by Bellatrix's screams. The seconds carried into minutes. Harry remained impassive while Bellatrix acclimated to her new level of agony.

"Think of my daughter, eh?" Said Harry. His eyes boring into her's. "You have no right to say that to me. You ruined her childhood by killing her mother that day. You should have known that mentioning her would only result in your pain. Answer the question or your pain is only beginning. I have many more spells saved up for you. You might recognize a few of them. Remember?"

The room was silent for a few minutes. Only Bellatrix's heavy breathing broke it. Another refusal to answer resulted in Bellatrix's left knee being hit with a bone exploding curse. Tonks had to look away from the sight. Kingsley seemed slightly sickened and the Unspeakables were paying very close attention.

Harry's eyes never left Bellatrix's. He was unwavering in his speech or actions. He asked again and Bellatrix hesitated for a second, and then told Harry to do something rather rudely. Her right femur was split in two as a result. She whimpered after the screams subsided. Another prompting resulted in a longer hesitation.

"I have never used this spell, but I think now is a perfect time to try it." A wave of his wand and an audible pop was heard from her left shoulder. She screamed in agony as her shoulder bones were separated from each other. Harry moved his feet for the first time since it all began. He walked to her and placed his hand on her

shoulder area roughly. Bellatrix screamed again as bones rubbed together improperly.

“Ready yet?” Asked Harry.

“Not yet you bastard,” forced out Bellatrix.

“Fine,” responded Harry. He trained his wand on her right arm at her elbow. He made a small side-to-side motion and a red beam shot out and struck her arm.

She paused a few seconds, and then she started hyperventilating. Her screams traded airtime with her rasping breaths. The others in the room didn’t seem to know what the spell was. Harry silenced Bellatrix and explained.

“An amputation hex. It is not real, but she sees and feels as if her wand arm has been removed. I have also been hitting her with spells to prevent her from passing out.”

Those in the room were looking to each other in shock. They were trying very hard not to lose their breakfast. The minutes went by as a silent woman shifted in agony. As she began to lose her expressiveness, Harry cancelled the silencing charm.

“How about now?” Asked Harry as if he was merely asking someone for directions to the nearest tub stop. “I can keep going or I can come back tomorrow. Either way, you will tell me who is working with you and where they are.”

Bellatrix looked completely spent and defeated. She raised her head slightly and told him that Malfoy and his friends were involved. She gave a list of a few other older members who had slipped through the last set of hearings. She gave what she could because she was in such a state of delirium from the pain, and she couldn’t tell the difference. She couldn’t give a location due to a Fidelius Charm.

“Thank you for your information, bitch,” Harry said. “Now, let’s see if they can fix you up without any lasting affects.”

Harry turned to the others in the room and they all hustled out of the room and into the hallway. Once the door was closed, Harry turned green, then pale, then he promptly threw up all over the floor. Once the dry heaves subsided, he pulled a dull grey potion from his cloak and swallowed it. Tonks vanished the sick with a wave of her wand. A few minutes of deep breaths and calming motions, Harry opened his eyes to find the others staring at him.

"What?" Harry asked. "Never seen anyone get sick after committing atrocious acts?"

"I am just surprised you held it in as well as you did, Harry," said a slightly peeked Tonks. "Maybe I should be scared that I managed to keep it in."

"I can't believe that you managed to do what no one else has been able to do," replied Kingsley. "I may not have liked the process, but I am not going to fault anyone or anything when it concerns that woman. She has killed too many of my friends to deserve my pity."

The Unspeakable from the corner spoke up. "I am impressed Mr. Potter. I never believed you had it in you to do something like that."

"If you knew what I had endured at her hands, you would be surprised by my control." Harry said with a sickly look. "Do I understand that she will never again see the light of day?"

"She will be healed by a recent healer-trainee and then she will be shipped off to a private cell in Azkaban that isn't known to anyone but the Unspeakables," answered the man. "Rest assured she will not escape again. Her memory will be adjusted to prevent her from remembering today, but not too much that we can't bring it back should further information be required. That will save us time should it be necessary."

"Harry," queried Tonks. "What was that potion you took?"

"It was a nausea potion with a mild calming draught added in."

"And you made it?" Came the amazed reply from Tonks. "Or did you have a certain person make it for you?"

"You know that Potions was never my subject, no thanks to Snape. And no, he didn't make it. I had my daughter brew the potion. She is quite skilled in potions you know."

Tonks laughed some at the answer while they were led out of the Department by their guide. With quick thanks and farewells, they were back in the lift headed to the atrium. Harry broke the silence.

"She never should have mentioned Samantha. She had no right to do that. Now, what are we going to do with the information, Kingsley?"

"I will make a report to Dumbledore tonight and he will decide from there. I have to report our findings to my superior now so we can begin surveillance on these Death Eaters immediately."

"I hope we do things better this time than we did last time around," said Harry. "I will not stand idly by this time and let things happen around me. I will not lose another friend to these hate mongers."

Tonks accompanied Harry to Hogwarts and relieved Marrows. Harry found Samantha in the common room and asked her to come with him. Four hours had passed since he left for the Ministry and it was nearly two o'clock in the afternoon.

Harry led Samantha to his private office and sat down on the couch. She joined him and he swept her into a hug. He held on as if his life depended on it. Sensing something happened during his trip to see Bellatrix, Samantha remained quiet for a bit. When the embrace lessened, she spoke up.

"You did what was necessary, Daddy. Remember that."

"How did you get so wise, Honey?" Asked Harry staring into his baby's green eyes so very like his own.

"By spending time with you of course," said Samantha with a smile. "Now is not the time for guilt, Father." The look on his face said otherwise. "Would you do it again now that it is over?"

Harry thought for a moment. "Yes, I would."



"Then it was necessary and you shouldn't think about it anymore. What is done, is done. What is the next step then?"

"I will find out tomorrow most likely. Dumbledore will need the night to think over our course of action before a meeting is called."

"So you just needed a hug from me?"

"I needed to be re-centered, my dear. And you are the best at doing that."

"Well, I am here everyday so feel free to ask anytime." She hesitated a short time thinking over her question. "Was it really that bad?"

"I was not friendly towards her," said Harry quietly. "I did terrible things to her. Things she did to me years ago while trying to learn the prophecy. I am ashamed of myself now."

"You reap what you sow, Father. She knew that when you showed up I bet. You are still my daddy and I love you no matter what happened to her." Samantha gave Harry another deep hug closing her eyes.

"I will be fine as long as you here to straighten me out." He planted a kiss on her forehead. He found her loving smile warming and familiar. He relived the first time he saw Allison. She wore that same smile and it had melted his heart. All the barriers he had built up to protect himself from Voldemort and his life crumbled under the smiling gaze of one woman. He knew then, that he was doomed to love her forever. He was so grateful that the love was returned easily. Otherwise his torment would have been prolonged.

Now, he had that same smile directed at him only from his daughter. "You look so much like your mother right now. She saved me when I met her. That same smile saved me then and you saved me now. Don't ever change yourself, Honey. You are a very caring, loving person. The world needs more people like you."

"Yes, Father. Are you going to break into song now?" Samantha asked cheekily.

Harry had to laugh. This was so like Allison, too. Serious and supportive until the mood needed changed. The remainder of the day was spent talking and playing games as a family.

Samantha returned to the common room near curfew and was swarmed by her friends asking what happened. She told them it was family time and that everything was okay.

The next day classes continued as normal and Samantha could be found waiting to hear what was going to happen next. Defense was more intense than normal. Many students were sporting minor bumps and bruises until they stopped by the hospital wing. The day's lesson of offensive dueling spells had many realizing just how critical speed and determination was in their spell work. Only Samantha found the class a little slow for her tastes, but her childhood explained all that away.

## 16. The Plan

Harry had just finished classes for the day when a message spell flew through the closed door and entered his head. The meeting was scheduled for nine o'clock that night. He would learn what the Order was going to do to stop this latest attempt to bring back Tom Riddle. The next four hours were going to be long to say the least.

Dinner passed quickly for the teachers. Harry spent the evening until the meeting on his broom flying around the pitch. He even played in a small, friendly game of tag with some students in the waning early March sunlight. The group, consisting of mostly third and fourth years, was surprised and pleased with Harry's involvement. He even gave them tips on flying and movement. A few were trying to improve enough to tryout for Quidditch next year.

As the night drug on, Harry wondered pointlessly about the castle. A meeting with Peeves broke up the monotony. A few well placed charms and the poltergeist was flying off in search of safer waters to cause mayhem. Harry final found himself traveling up the stairwell to Dumbledore's office.

Upon entering, Harry found he was one of the first arrivals. Ginny and Hermione greeted him with understanding smiles. Mad-Eye was next to enter followed by the remainder over the next five minutes. A group of around twenty five sat or stood in the office. Dumbledore glanced around the room and began the meeting.

"We are here to share the latest bit of information that was gathered recently from Bellatrix Lestrage. She has told us that Draco Malfoy and his friends from school compose the largest amount of the current Death Eaters. A few members from before remain and are now under Ministry surveillance."

"Why are Draco and his friends not under watch as well?" Asked Molly.

"The information concerning them was learned by unofficial means and they can not act officially on the information. They are passively monitoring them, but nothing direct." Dumbledore's eyes rested on Harry as he said this.

Many members followed his gaze and fixed theirs on Harry as well. Only Tonks and Kingsley kept theirs on Dumbledore.

"She is still alive," said Harry. "What more do you want? What more does she deserve?"

"I am not accusing you Harry," said Albus.

"You sure about that, Albus?"

"Did you break a guarantee you made to me, Harry?"

"Nope," was Harry answer.

"Well, now that the older Death Eaters are being taken care of by the aurors." Kingsley nodded. "We can choose our actions for the remainder. Any ideas?" Asked Dumbledore.

"We should eliminate them before they can kill any others," said Marrows.

"Capture them and put them in Azkaban," said Molly.

"I like Marrows idea," said Mad-Eye.

"Should we become like them, Mr. Marrows?" Asked Albus. "On what charges, Molly? We know from previous experience that the Death Eaters conduct themselves in ways to hide their actions or at least in easily excusable ways. The Malfoy family may not have the power it once did, but there are still many sympathetic old pure-blood families out there. They have felt oppressed and betrayed by the Ministry in the last fifteen years. Many of the reforms we put in place effects their lives directly. They will be resistant to destroying a public family such as the Malfoy's. We would need real proof to convince them. I feel we should investigate and try to build a case against Draco."

There were murmurs and various comments of agreement or dissention. Harry couldn't believe that history was going to repeat itself again. He shook his head thinking of all those lost the last time. Some of the group noticed Harry's movement and grew quiet. They

remembered the last time he disagreed with a plan of Albus's and there was nearly a division of the Order as a result.

"Harry, do you have something to say?" Asked Albus remembering the past. "You are a full member now and I will entertain your suggestions."

"Sirius." The mood in the room dropped immediately. Everyone remembered the circumstances behind that name. Harry remained steady in his position. "Percy." Molly stifled a tear and Arthur wrapped an arm around her. "Remus." Harry wavered a slightly. "The students, teachers, innocent people. All lost the last time we chose to wait-and-see. How many lives rest on your head, Albus, from that decision? I disagreed the last time, but I backed down because of your experience. We could have torn apart his group. Removed the killers from the plans before they happened. So many deaths could have been avoided if we had acted. So many lives could have been changed for the better.

"But no, we waited. And people died at their hands. We watched as the death toll grew. As children were orphaned if they were lucky, we waited. For what? A better chance for me to kill him. A trapped, wounded animal will strike out at its attacker without planning without thought. Voldemort could have been that animal, but we left him to plot and plan. He attacked when he wanted, not when we forced him.

"Draco is not the mastermind Tom was. He is arrogant and overconfident. He will not take losses calmly. Now that Bellatrix is out of the picture, he is leading the group. He never learned from his mistakes in school, and he won't now. If we hit them now and remove as many as possible, he will be forced to strike or recruit harder. Let us end this before it really begins. We have been down that road before and we know where it leads. I will not repeat my fifth or sixth years again, Albus."

Those in the room were looking around for others reactions. They had never seen Albus Dumbledore receive such a dressing down before. Slowly, Mad-Eye, Tonks, Marrows, Arthur, Ron, Ginny, Neville, Kingsley, a few others, and surprisingly Molly gravitated to stand behind Harry. Hermione was conflicted between loyalty in Harry

and faith in knowledge and experience with Dumbledore. Snape was decidedly with Albus and he voiced his opinion.

"You think you know everything, Potter?" Came the snide response from Snape. "Just like always, the great Harry Potter, knows best. You are the one who is overconfident and arrogant. You will make the same poor choices that led to your idiot godfather's death."

Many held their breath waiting for the battle to ensue. Harry calmly replied but made no hesitation to express his thoughts on the subject.

"Still pissed at yourself for failing to save that worthless sack of shite all those years ago, Snape? Draco was a lost cause and you knew that. His father had too much influence over him growing up. Once Lucius lost, fled as the coward he was, all the power and esteem Draco reveled in was gone. He was on the outside and he craved to get it back. This was the only way to get it. He knew no other way and accepted nothing less from anyone. You were a Death Eater. You know why they do it. Can you honestly say that those known to us could be saved?"

"Should we attempt to save their own children now or wait until they have been perverted fully like Draco was? His own son may not be salvageable, but his friends might be. I learned to choose my fights carefully when growing up. I choose this one, now. I will not allow history to repeat itself. Albus, you are wrong to wait. We must act or we will bury more of our own. I can not bury another friend. My wife was the last. I swore it to her. They need Voldemort's wand to complete the ceremony or mine. They aren't going to get either."

"Do you know where Tom's is, Harry?" Asked Kingsley.

Harry swiftly reached into his right boot and drew a wand, yew, thirteen and a half inches long. He felt the air tingle around him and the others did as well. "I have never let this wand out of my sight since that day. I will let no one else touch it. Samantha has never seen it. If they need this thing so badly, why don't I just break it now? If it would stop him from returning, it is a small thing to do."

“Harry, you should not do that at this time,” said Dumbledore. “We do not know what will happen if you do. Tom could be bound to that wand in some fashion. Breaking it could free him.”

“Or end him,” said Harry. “I am not afraid of the mystery, but I want to see what happens to him if I do it. But we are getting off the subject.” Harry slid the wand back into his boot.

“Headmaster, you know this would be a fool’s errand,” snapped Snape. “Do not indulge the boy.”

“Severus, hind sight has shown me that I may have made a mistake before. The results were costly, but I feel the price was worth what was accomplished. If I had made another choice, things could have ended up worse or better.” Albus went silent for a bit.

“Alright, Harry. I will listen to you this time. Your counsel has never proven wrong and you have been quite adept at getting results. I yield to your chosen path. We will take the fight to the Death Eaters that we know about. There is one exception, you must wait for the meeting with Draco or Voldemort before you do anything. It is the price of leadership. You will be needed here as a teacher and when or if Voldemort’s spirit is confronted. I doubt many could resist him if he wished to possess them.”

“Yes, Sir,” Harry conceded. “I will not lead any missions, but I will not let you spread them thin either. I want no less than five people per Death Eater on the missions. We go in silently and quickly. Hit them hard, and drag them out. If they use an unforgivable curse, do not hesitate to return the favor. Anyone who isn’t comfortable killing a killer needs to speak up now.”

No one said anything. Those who quietly sided with Harry before had a look of determination about them. Snape looked like he lost a fight with his wife, if he had ever had one. Albus seemed resigned to the path that had been chosen.

“Alastor will coordinate the operations,” Albus said retaking the reins. “Tonks and Alastor will survey the target prior to any mission. We will begin immediately with those on the list who are the least likely to be a threat. We will remove the support personnel, the bodies, before

going after the command structure. Full location details will be gathered prior to any attacks so we know where they will most likely retreat to.

“Thank you, everyone. Won’t you have a good evening and be safe. This meeting is adjourned.”

Harry left the office feeling like he both achieved and lost something. The next few weeks were going to be the quiet before the storm. He knew that Mad-Eye and Tonks were anxious to get this going. Harry decided that he would spend as much time with Samantha as he could leading up to the attack phase of the plan. Then he would have to play it by ear.

“I will not fail you, my dear, not again, never again.” Harry walked back to his room and went to bed. Tomorrow was a new day and he would make the best of it.

Over the next two weeks, Tonks gave tactical reports to the Order. Locations, times, wards, and everything else that Moody demanded knowing. The first attack was planned for the next Saturday. They were going to hit the Bulstrode’s first. Millicent was a friend but not a confidant to Draco. She and what remained of her family supported the Malfoys.

Samantha loved the added attention and affection from her father. She knew something was going to happen soon, but asked Harry to tell her before it happened. She spent any free time she had with Harry when he wasn’t teaching. Her friends understood and had their own indicators of impending trouble. Sirius could tell Hermione was worried about something. Mira had received overly affectionate letters from her mother during the last week.

The night before the Order was set to begin its first offensive maneuvers of its existence; Harry brought Samantha to his room for dinner. She entered to find a homey setting and a nice meal waiting for them. Dobby was bouncing in the corner eager to serve any needs.

“A family meal together sounded nice to me earlier this week. So, here you go, Honey.”



“Thank you, Dad. It looks great. Thank you, Dobby.”

“Miss is most welcome. Dobby is being a good elf for Harry Potter, Sir, and his Samantha Potter.”

“We appreciate it, Dobby,” thanked Harry.

The two sat down and ate leisurely. Small talk about classes and friends filled the time between bites. Samantha knew tonight was when she was going to learn more about the happenings of the last few weeks. Dinner carried on until the dessert arrived. Once she had finished her pudding, Harry spoke in a serious tone.

“Samantha, over the next few weeks maybe even months, the Order will be conducting raids on the Death Eaters we know about and the Ministry can’t touch. Things could go smoothly or they could fall apart like last time. Only time will tell, but I am not going to be doing anything more than planning until the end. If you would like, I can keep you updated on our progress.”

Samantha thought about the idea of knowing what was going on. “I want to know, but I am not sure I should know. Do you understand, Dad?”

“Yes, I understand. I had the same problems once. After awhile, not knowing was better than knowing. It is your choice to make, Honey. Let me know whenever you decide.”

“Right now, I want to know.”

“Alright,” Harry began. “The first attack will be tomorrow night on the Bulstrode’s. We are trying to erode the support base of their current leader, Draco Malfoy.”

“Hmm, now why doesn’t that surprise me, Father?” Asked Samantha. “Dominic is such a little snot stain I find it hard to believe that his father is running the show.”

Harry laughed at his daughter’s choice of words. “I see you were in America too long, Honey. I would call him a tosser or maybe a wanker, but a snot stain, honestly.”

"I like having my own insults thank you very much. My friends find them entertaining."

"At least you have fun with them, I never really got into them much. But speaking of Dominic, I would like you to be more wary of him until this is all over. He may not take kindly to his father being threatened or his way of life put at risk. He doesn't know any different, but that won't excuse his behavior. Just be careful, Honey."

"I know, father. I will be safe and the others will keep an eye on me." Samantha smirked some and asked, "are you sure you aren't my mother, too? You seem all hen-ish right now."

"Cheeky little brat you are," Harry retorted but couldn't help himself from smiling at her wit. "I'll have you know you are lucky to have someone who cares so much. I am sure my aunt would just 'love' to meet you. Shall I ring her and arrange a meet?"

"Now who is the cheeky git?"

"Me apparently, but don't ever lose your sense of humor, Honey. It can save you when all else fails. Your mother taught me that."

"I miss her, Dad. Don't you leave me, too. I need at least one parent to torment me as I grow up."

A tight hug and a few light-hearted minutes of talk and the night was over. Samantha was walked back to her common room and kissed good night. The next evening was not as pleasant.

Harry paced nervously in Dumbledore's office waiting for news of the raid. Fifteen members were active in tonight's operation. Millicent, her mother, and her brother were all expected to be at the house tonight. No other people were likely to be there. The plan was to hit the house from the front and back simultaneously. Twelve members were supposed to storm the house and stun everyone inside. Then, they were supposed to portkey the captives to the Department of Mysteries for interviewing. Once the truth was discovered, they would be handed over to the aurors for criminal charges.

Harry was impatient, because the members were ten minutes late returning to Hogwarts for their debriefing. "Harry, please sit down. They will be here when they arrive and not a moment earlier."

Harry didn't like Dumbledore's logic. There was too much waiting and sitting involved. He wanted to be doing not avoiding a lemon drop. A few more minutes ticked by, before the first team arrived in the office via portkey. Harry saw two members sporting bandages and a sling. The second group arrived right before the third. Both were in about the same shape.

"What the hell happened?" Yelled Harry. "How many injured?"

"Harry, calm down," soothed Tonks. "There were only five injured. All were minor injuries. We caught the targeted three and two others who were in the upper floor. They never came out during the surveillance so we didn't know they were there until they attacked. That Millicent isn't very skilled with a wand, but she can scrum with the best of them. Peters can attest to that, can't you Marcus."

"Shut up, Tonks," snapped Peters. "See if you do any better against a man-of-a-woman like that. She surprised me, that is all."

"Hermione learned that in second year, Peters," said Harry. "Who were the other two?"

"No one important," answered Tonks. "Additional family from somewhere, they might have been on the run from the looks of it. They will be sent wherever they need to be sent. Only one killing curse was thrown and that missed by a mile. Well, the china cabinet might disagree, but I am not complaining any."

"So the delay was due to the extra people and the injuries?" Queried Harry.

"Yes and no," admitted Tonks. "Some aurors were doing a patrol in the town. Since they at least know the names of those we are going after, they must be doing what they can unofficially. Kingsley had to clear everything with them before they would let us go. The dark marks on our 'friends' made things move along nicely."

“Can we expect further interruptions from the aurors, Kingsley?”  
Asked Dumbledore.

“I am not sure, but it might be more of the same. At least we might have some help in the future should things go badly sometime. Either way, we should proceed as fast as possible with our plans. They will know what happened soon.”

“We will do just that,” Albus spoke. “I would like to plan for at least one raid a night until resistance becomes too dangerous. Perhaps we can learn from this attack and improve our future plans.”

“Yeah, duck when the large Amazon woman runs at you,” quipped Peters.

The meeting broke up after adjustments were made to tomorrow’s plan. Everyone felt good about the night except for Harry. He was worried that they came too close to losing someone tonight. He wanted to be involved, but knew that Samantha deserved better until it was unavoidable.

The next five raids were perfect and no casualties were suffered. Two more students unknowingly lost their parents to the legal system. It was only on the seventh raid that things went awry. The expected two, became eight when the Order crashed a meeting of Death Eaters. One Death Eater was killed and two others were seriously injured. Moody would claim later that he lived for nights like that, but no one else would agree. Four Order members were sent to St. Mungo’s that night. Only one left the next day. Two were touch and go for awhile but pulled through in the end. Peters failed to learn the lesson of ducking and suffered severe wounds. He didn’t leave St. Mungo’s until his funeral.

Harry was upset about the injuries and death, but no one would agree that he should be a team member on the raids. He could never convince anyone to support him in that plan.

As a result, Defense class was more intense every session. The first thing he taught every year was dodging curses. He didn’t want another Marcus Peters on his hands. No student would die because they failed to duck.

Samantha noticed the change in attitude of her father. After the second class that week, she asked him for a reason. Samantha was saddened by the lost of an Order member, but she was secretly happy that her father wasn't involved in the raids. She needed him in her life.

## 17. Confrontation

After the deaths of the Death Eater and Peters, the raids became much more dangerous. Every dark witch and wizard had been alerted to the possibility of their capture or worse. Most went underground but a few remained defiantly in public. Those in the public's eye surrounded themselves with sympathetic members of the community with connections in the Ministry. Mad-Eye's task grew harder by the day.

"Bloody evil gits," yelled Mad-Eye. "The Robesen's have a Wizengamot member and the Hinkels have an auror and a Hogwarts' governor with them nearly all the time. This is completely out of control. How can we get them without losing all the support for our cause? That idiot Peters kills a Death Eater and then dies on us. A dead man can't explain himself to the Ministry so we had to do it for him."

"Alastor, please calm yourself," Albus tried but failed. "Becoming excited never solved your problems before."

"Well, not the complicated ones," came the gruff reply. "Malfoy's down to just a handful of people now. The Hinkel's, Robesen's, Nott, Parkinson, and Flint are all he has left since we nabbed the stupid brothers last night. More meat than brains those two were."

"Any leads on his location?" Albus queried.

"Maybe after Kingsley gets here. He interviewed them this afternoon, but had some bureaucrat nosing around the department before he could get away. He said he would make the meeting tonight."

"If we learn of his location, I am going after him," Harry stated without a hint of emotion. "Any objections to that plan?"

Only some of the members of the Order were in attendance tonight. Those that were could only look at each other and hope someone else had a reason to give. No one spoke up, not even Molly could see a way out of it.

“Harry,” Albus had a worn look about him. “Things have been difficult targeting the other members. None of our information is usable in court so we can not appeal to the legal system to provide us more leverage. I find myself forced to agree with you at this time.” Not since the last war did Albus look so defeated in the face of near victory.

“We knew there would be a time when this would happen,” Harry said to the room. “The time has come, now. This must end soon. The school year is nearly over and I do not want this carrying over into the summer. I want to spend it with my daughter. Showing her London and maybe taking a quiet vacation.”

At that moment, Kingsley entered the office huffing a bit. He gathered his breath and said that Draco would be at Parkinson Manor tonight around midnight. He said that Crabbe had been present when the supplies for the rebirthing had been moved to the dungeon in the basement of the home.

“You mean I only have three hours to plan an assault of this importance, Kingsley?” Mad-Eye said angrily. “Are you daft? You couldn’t let me know earlier? This will be a right mess.”

“There was nothing I could have done, Alastor,” Kingsley countered. “That moron from ‘Cooperation’ pestered me ever since the interrogation. I couldn’t even use the loo without him following me.”

“Then you should have led him down a deserted corridor and stunned him,” Mad-Eye barked. “This is more important than whatever he wanted.”

“Enough!” Said Harry forcefully. “Moody, make the plans. Who will be going in with me?”

The normal group raised their hands. Most others offered to watch the grounds if that was included in the plan which Moody always did.

“Ron, Hermione, at least one of you has to stay behind,” Harry said firmly. “I will not be responsible for ruining your family. This is not negotiable.”

Hermione was cut off before she got started. She looked at Ron and knew Harry was right. Ron motioned to her and she volunteered to stay at Hogwarts, but gave Harry a look that said she wasn't happy about the situation.

"Thank you, Ron and Hermione," Harry said. "This will all be over with soon. Then we can relax. It has to end this time. I am running out of energy to fight this battle."

"I understand, mate," Ron sympathized. "I'd like to live my life without all of this too."

"Now, Harry," Hermione interjected. "You have to stay focused on the mission. Remember who you are doing this for. You should run through the most likely spells you will need so you won't have any problems when the time comes to use them. Also, you should take a nap before you leave. You don't want to get tired when you need to be alert."

Harry couldn't stop the chuckle from escaping. The same Hermione as always, she would never change. Harry spent the next few minutes watching Moody plan and strategize with Albus and Ron for the assault. Kingsley made portkeys for the trip there and back. Hermione sat at a table with books laying open looking for any special spell that might make the night easier. Tonks was sitting in a corner staring at a silver spinning object. She was changing her features every few seconds. Arthur was listening to the plans being described by Alastor. Molly was sitting near the door trying her best not to worry herself into a breakdown.

Harry stood slowly and headed for the office door to leave. Tonks, Molly, and Ginny followed him with their eyes. They saw his calm exterior and fluid motions. Ginny made to get up and follow him, but Harry, without turning around, waved a hand smoothly in her direction stopping her. He only wished to speak to one person right now.

Samantha was in the midst of finishing her History essay when an image flashed in her head of the entrance hall. She packed up her supplies and stuffed them in her bag. She asked Mira if she would be able to take it with her to their room if she wasn't back before then.



The trip to the entrance hall was a blur and she was standing in front of her father before she realized it.

“Walk with me, Honey?” Harry asked and started towards the kitchens. “I am in the mood for a sundae. How about you?”

“Sure, Dad, what ever you say.” Samantha knew enough to be suspicious of her father’s actions. “So, are you going to tell me what is going on when we get there?”

Harry smiled, “You are my baby that is for sure. You would have fit in with my friends when I was a student. Have you been to the kitchens yet?”

“Of course, Father. It was my second or third week here. It was pretty cool.”

“Missed a meal?” Harry asked.

“Nope. I needed a late night snack. Sirius showed me where it was and how to get inside.”

“It would have been a Weasley. They could never last more than a few hours without needing something to eat. Ron was the same way, probably worse.”

Arriving at the pear portrait, Samantha gave it the tickle and they entered. Dobby appeared almost immediately and was even quicker to bring them each a sundae. They took seats in a corner and Harry threw up a privacy charm.

“Honey, I am going to end this tonight,” Harry began without preamble. “We hope to confront Draco Malfoy and at least a few of his remaining supporters. There is a chance that whatever form Voldemort is in will be there as well. With any luck, this story of hate and evil will be over tonight.” Harry paused knowing he should continue but not wanting to finish his thoughts.

“Dad,” Samantha knew what Harry was trying to avoid saying. “You will come back to me. I don’t doubt it for a second. Just go, finish this,

and come back. I want my dad to be how he should be. How he should have been for all those years.”

“There is a chance that I won’t...” Harry was cut off by his daughter.

“Stop. You will come back and that is all there is to it. I will accept nothing less. How could you deny me?” Samantha gave him the best doe-eyed expression she could manage. She had only had to play the perfect-daughter act twice before. Once was a ‘misunderstanding’ at Salem and the other was never mentioned after it occurred.

“Hey, stop that,” Harry pleaded. “I am in charge here. You can’t beat me that easily. How do you expect me to win if I can be taken down by a fourteen-year-old?”

“I expect that none of them are me.” Samantha smiled brightly masking the serious tone of the conversation. “You need to be more positive, Dad. You are always so negative even when you try to be positive.”

“For you, I will try harder. Do you want me to let you know what is going on or when it is over?”

“I want to know when you are done,” Samantha said. “I won’t sleep very well or at all until I know you are safe.”

“I will do that, Honey. Now I had better get you back to your dorm. I still need to prepare for tonight.”

Harry walked his baby back to Gryffindor Tower and hugged her tightly in the entrance hole. When they had said their goodnights and well-wishes, Samantha entered the common room to find her friends and a few older students staring at her. She walked over to her friends and sat down giving them a look demanding to know what was so interesting in her hugging her father.

Sirius was the only one to answer. “It wasn’t the hug that got people looking. It was the glow from your father that did that. What the hell was that?”

“What glow?” was all Samantha could say.

Nearly two hours later, Albus walked into Harry's office to speak to him before the mission. He knocked but received no response. He let himself in and found Harry sitting cross-legged on the floor in front of his desk. That wouldn't cause much notice, but the aura of power emanating from Harry would cause much notice to be taken.

Albus waited for Harry to become aware of his surroundings on his own. When Harry stood up and made for the door, Albus followed. On the trip to the Great Hall, Albus asked if there was anything Harry needed. The only answer was a guarantee that Hermione and Ron would be allowed to assume parental rights for Samantha should something happen. Albus promised that he would do everything he could to see that happen in the unlikely event Harry failed.

Harry met the others at the gates of Hogwarts. Twenty-three people, in total, took the portkeys to a glade near the Parkinson Manor. Everyone wore a serious look on their face. This was going to be the end or at least a major step towards the end. Harry gave one last order to the others before they walked the remaining distance to the target. That order was to 'live be any means.'

There were going to be three members in the front and two on each side coving the grounds. The remaining sixteen people were going to enter the home from the rear and storm the building. Harry planned to lead the mission. He wanted to be the first one in the door. The plan quickly fell apart when a spell flew at them from an upstairs window.

Harry saw no way to gain entry into the home without putting everyone in danger. He had promised himself that he would do everything he could to avoid more deaths of his friends. He gave the order to set the house alight and cast anti-apparation wards on the property. Within seconds, the old manor was blazing with an eerily green-tinge to the normal flames.

Screams could be heard from inside the home. Harry watched and waited for the occupants to burst through the doors or windows. One minute went by and the screams continued. Two minutes passed and the screams never waned. At three minutes, the first shape left the structure sending killing curses flying in all directions.

Harry quickly cut the death eater down before anyone was hit by the sickening green light. The screams continued without stopping. Harry then realized that the screams were from a spell meant to distract them. He quickly summoned the fallen enemy and uncovered the head. Pansy Parkinson's mother looked up at Harry with vacant eyes.

Harry sent four reductos at the house leveling it. The screams stopped and only household items were revealed by the flames. Draco had known that his plans had been discovered. He took anything of importance out of the home before Harry got there.

Harry felt a rush of fear, anger, and revulsion flow through him at that point. He needed to get to Hogwarts immediately. Harry turned and yelled out that they were to return to their starting point right away.

Harry found the welcoming site of Hogwarts foreboding. Something was wrong and the something involved Samantha. At a dead run, Harry sprinted up the path to the main doors. The Order members fought to keep up. The large oak doors burst open when Harry neared and met Albus in the entryway. Albus wore a sad and unpleasant look.

"What happened?" Asked Harry as the other members arrived.

"Harry," began Albus, "it would appear that something has happened to Samantha."

"And what the bloody hell would that be?" Demanded Harry.

Everyone in the hall held their breaths when Harry spoke. The air, itself, felt charged. A spark could ignite the volatile mixture.

"It would seem that Samantha left her dorm after you dropped her off," said Albus. "Her friends alerted me when she failed to return."

"Where was she going?" Harry asked.

"We do not know. No one seems to know."

"Someone knows," Harry said and the dangerous glint in his eyes was visible to all. "You just aren't willing to find out."

Harry turned toward the dungeons and walked past Snape who was standing in the hallway leading to them.

“What do you think you are going to do, Potter?” Snape snarled.

“Find out where my daughter is from the person who did it to her.”

“You think I am going to allow you to abuse one of my students, Potter?” Snape said hiding his apprehension.

“No, I am sure you aren’t going to allow me,” Harry began, “but who said anything about me asking for permission. Get in my way, Snape, and I will kill you without hesitation. This isn’t a potion, this is my daughter. If I have to “abuse” every person in this castle to find her, I will. Do not test me on this.”

Snape paused in his attempt to catch up to Harry. Albus hesitated as well. Ron and Hermione, who had joined the spectacle, ran after Harry immediately. The others followed in short order. The trip to the Slytherin common room was short when it was done at a run. Harry asked for the password as he neared the destination. Albus figured that giving the password was safer than rebuilding part of the castle.

The entrance opened and Harry entered at a fast pace. He found Dominic Malfoy holding court with his friends looking quite pleased with himself. The smirk and superiority vanished as Harry was noticed. Everyone in the room saw the dangerous glow about Harry. Everyone smart backed up to the outer edges of the room.

“Harry, do not do anything rash...” Albus tried to calm Harry.

“Shut up, Albus!” Harry snapped as he came up to Dominic.

No one said a word to Harry after that command.

“Where is she,” Harry demanded.

“Whhhooo?” Asked a very frightened Dominic.

“You know who,” said Harry with an edge to his voice that had shivers running through everyone’s spines. “If Draco hurts her, you will never

live to regret your actions tonight. Now, where did you send her?" Harry's voice maintained its force, but his aura kept growing.

"I...am...not...afraid?" Dominic stammered.

Harry flicked his wrist and his aura flashed a bit and Dominic was on the ground instantly. He was writhing around as if he was under a very painful spell. Harry's gaze swept the room staring at each of Dominic's friends.

"If any of you know, I advise you to tell me, now!" Harry was more frightening than they had ever dreamed he could have been. This was the person who killed the Dark Lord. He was the person who defeated seven death eaters in Hogsmeade. He was scarier than he had been in Hogsmeade.

"Potter, release that student!" Ordered Snape.

Harry, without turning around, swept his hand behind him and Snape was launched back out the entrance and tumbled into the middle of the hallway some twenty feet from where he started. The Slytherins saw their head of house, the most imposing figure they had ever seen in Hogwarts, disposed of as if common rubbish. The headmaster did nothing to prevent it. Many asked themselves if he could have stopped it from happening.

Dominic ceased his thrashing and seemed to rise from the floor on invisible strings.

"Her location, or I will kill you slowly," Harry spoke quietly to the slobbering figure levitating before him.

"I was given a portkey to get into her hands when I was ordered," Dominic said haltingly. "I got the order an hour ago or so."

"I know it was a portkey you idiot," Harry snapped. "The destination!"

"Some graveyard, I think."

"If she is hurt, you will die by my hands. Have no illusions of someone saving you," Harry spoke menacingly. He looked at those in the room.

“Abandon your thoughts and desires to gain power or influence by hurting innocents. There will always be someone who will fight back. And they will hurt you when pressed. You wear a Death Eater cloak and I will not hesitate to kill you.”

Harry turned to the newer Orders members. “Malfoy Manner, destroy it. Nothing remains. There will be no image of royalty or supremacy to rally around after tonight. Go!” The group of twelve turned and left to carry out their orders.

“She is in Little Hangleton. The graveyard where he came back the last time,” Harry said. “I am going there, now. If any of you want to come, then let’s go. It ends tonight, one way or the other. She will live at all costs.”

Harry left the common room leaving many students and Order members speechless. Albus directed the Prefects to comfort the students who needed it and two seventh years to carry Professor Snape to the hospital wing. Harry had just stepped over Snape’s still form when people started moving. The remaining members followed Harry who was still glowing.

Harry felt a twinge of pain and nearly panicked. His pace quickened and then he disappeared from the hallway. Everyone paused before running even faster to the nearest apparation point.

Harry appeared in the graveyard by one of the large tombstones. His appearance was silent and he scanned the area for others. He saw a small group at the other end of the graveyard standing around looking alert. He sensed a few more, but couldn’t see them. He drew his wand and cast an aura-amplification spell. Five more shapes appeared in various hues of color.

By his count, there were ten to fifteen Death Eaters in the area. They stood between him and his daughter. People were going to get hurt tonight. Harry only hoped Samantha wasn’t one of them. He couldn’t bear it. His planning for the assault was ruined very quickly.

The noisy apparation of others triggered the battle. The five hidden wizards revealed themselves and sent dark curses at the order

members. Harry jumped out from his hiding place and joined the battle.



## 18. For Her

Harry sent fast, vicious curses at those Death Eaters closest to his position. A Reductor curse ended the life of one robed figure by separating his body from itself. That one spell saved Arthur from an early grave by a killing curse. Harry's next spell exploded the bones in a second Death Eater's chest. Every breath earned the masked man more severely punctured lungs.

Harry saw two other figures fall to Order member spells. The fifth previously hidden man was struck with a bludgeoning spell from Harry and a flame spell from Ginny. A smoldering pile of a broken human remained behind.

The group on the other side of the graveyard had time to take defensive positions. Harry's quick count put their opposition at around ten people. Harry knew that Malfoy, Nott, Marcus Flint, and Pansy remained at the very least. Samantha had not been seen yet, but Harry knew she was nearby. He could feel her.

A vision of a mausoleum entered his mind. It was behind the remaining Death Eaters. Harry took a chance and apparated to behind the enemy lines. The order members held their fire when Harry appeared in the background. The Death Eaters popped up to send a full volley of killing curses.

They were met by Harry's metal shards spell. Four fell to the shrapnel with moderate wounds. The other four turned on Harry and sent a barrage of spells at him. He moved behind a marker stone and sent a molten metal hex at them. By the response, at least two were hit. The screams sounded throughout the graveyard.

"Surrender!" Yelled Harry, "Or you all die, slowly."

"Stop now, Potter!" Shouted a death eater, "Or your daughter dies."

Harry's response was a sulfuric acid hex that slowly ate away the robe, hair, and skin of the stupid man. "The next one will die slower than him. Surrender."

Two black cloaks rose from their hidden position. The third set off at a run away from the battlefield. Ginny felled the escaping person with a piercing curse that dropped him head-first into a gravestone.

The two who surrendered kept their hands raised. Harry was immediately in their faces. "Where and how many?"

"Malfoy, Parkinson, Nott, and Luthur in the mausoleum," said the scared figure.

"Thank you," responded Harry. With a swipe of his wand, the two figures' heads left their bodies and tumbled to the ground.

Dumbledore was shocked. He couldn't believe what Harry had done.

"Stuff it, old man," Harry snapped as he made his way to the structure. "Threaten my daughter, and I take your life. There will be no prisoners this time. They only get released more angry and determined later. This group ends today. Four more die tonight. The only thing saving their families will be Samantha asking it of me."

Harry neared the building and summoned the door off its hinges. The crash was deafening and dust rose from the destruction. A sweep of a wand and the dust was whisked away. A bolt of green light shot from the hole. Harry summoned Nott aggressively. A scream sounded and a body flew from the opening. Harry shot a redactor curse into the flying body and a sickly, wet sound was the result. The cancelled summoning spell caused the body to plow into the earth kicking up dirt and grass.

The Order members stayed back. They knew shooting spells into the room could result in Samantha being hurt and no one wanted Harry after them next. They felt it was Harry's job at this point. They would ensure no one escaped.

Purple, green, and red spells shot at Harry. Another black robe leapt from the building flying at Harry. A black sword appeared and cleaved the body in half. Those with weak stomachs had to shield their eyes from the sight. Harry looked on unaffected.

Two more spells flew at Harry with much better precision. He shielded himself and summoned Pansy into his arms. She screamed and kicked, but Harry held her by the throat, tightly, until she stilled.

“What now, git?” Harry called. “I got your whore, you have my daughter. I offer an even trade.”

“Fuck you, Potter,” a voice replied. “I can get a new whore.”

Pansy squealed in anger until Harry tightened his grip. “Fine, I will kill her now and bring your son here. Maybe you will care about him a little more.”

Harry mumbled something. A crack sounded and Dobby appeared with Dominic in his grasp. A green light shot from Harry’s wand into Pansy’s head and she fell limply to the ground. A quick whirl of Harry’s cloak and Dominic was hefted out of the elf’s control.

“How about now, arse?” Queried Harry. “Your only son at the mercy of your greatest enemy. Willing to trade now?”

Dominic struggled, but met the same tight grip that choked his life away. He began to cry when he saw his mother’s body at his feet. “Why?”

“Ask your father that?” Harry answered. “I offered to trade her for Sam, but he wasn’t interested. Now your life hangs in the balance.”

“Why father, why?” Dominic cried out loud.

Draco emerged from the damaged structure with Samantha in his arms. His wand was pointed at Harry. She had a trickle of blood running down her forehead. Her eyes met Harry’s and held them. No fear was evident. No worry, just resolve and determination.

“Release my son, Potter and I won’t kill your bitch, daughter,” Draco demanded.

Dominic cried a little as he felt his larynx compress. “Watch your words Draco. Your son doesn’t have much space left before he chokes to death. I wouldn’t advise trying to do the same to Samantha,

though. I will kill you and yours if she is harmed. That is a wizard's oath."

Harry's eyes never left Samantha's. She saw the same determination in his face that she used to see right before they went on vacation. Her father would do anything to protect her. He would hurt anyone to save her. He loved her more than anything. She felt his thoughts in her head. *'Hit the ground when I say so. Stay down. Crawl to your left.'*

Samantha moved her eyes up and down in understanding. She felt her father's magic increase. It was smothering at the moment. She knew he was going to level everything near Draco and she couldn't care less. She knew the score. She read the stories of the last war. Her father knew how the games were played. He didn't play well with others in those games.

"Give me my heir, Potter." Draco yelled. He was coming unhinged. Everyone saw the desperation in his eyes. "Let him go and you get your bitch back."

"I warned you before, Draco," Harry said evenly. "Watch your words. Your son isn't doing well here. He needs air. Let her go, or you watch your own son die at my hands."

Draco lessened his grip. Samantha yelled over the connection that she could break free. Harry twitched his wand slightly. Samantha tensed. *'Down'*

Samantha wrenched free and dove to her left and kept crawling away. Harry let loose all his anger and hate towards Draco. A blast of light yellow light hit Draco in the chest. He was frozen for a second, and then he started to vaporize. In the span of five seconds, the body a Draco was no more. Only bits of cloth remained.

Dominic ran to the remains of his father crying. He reached the scorched spot and was lost. His father had groomed him to continue the fight against the weak and mudbloods. He grabbed his wand, once forgotten, and spun around. He leveled it at Harry. "Avada Ked..."

“Confodio!” Shouted Samantha from her position on the ground. Her curse struck Dominic in the side of his chest before he could finish the killing curse. The air left his lungs as he fell to the ground face first. Samantha looked to her father running towards her. She felt his embrace as he wrapped his arms around her. She felt safe and secure. She began to realize what his life had been like. All the tragedy and hate that surrounded him. Fear and death that followed him. He was just her dad.

“I got you,” Harry breathed. “You are safe, Baby. I am sorry this happened. We should have stayed in the Colonies.”

“Dad,” Samantha began looking up. “Hush. I am fine. You are fine. Let’s go back to school. I am kind of tired.”

“OK, Honey,” Harry smiled for the first time in awhile.

“Not ssoo fast, Potter,” came a hissing voice. “I will be reborn, tonight.”

“I wondered when you would reveal yourself, Tom,” Harry replied. “No followers left, git. Just you all alone, now.”

“There will alwayss be more, Boy.” A shape emerged from the mausoleum and drifted towards Harry. “I will never die, Potter. I am immortal!”

“You are a moment from death,” Harry answered. “You are merely a soul, what’s left of one, without a body. You are being held here by something. You know what that is don’t you, Tom?” Harry pulled the feared yew wand from his boot. “Been looking for this haven’t you, Tommy?”

“My wand iss merely a wand, Boy,” Voldemort said with a longing in this ethereal voice. “Leave it and you and yourss live another day.”

“I don’t think so, Tom,” Harry handed the wand to Samantha. “My dear, if you will.”

Samantha gripped the wand at both ends and swiftly brought it down across her knee. The wand snapped cleanly. Harry sighed and

Samantha smiled. A screech sounded from the cloud of darkness. It was painful to hear, but neither Potter flinched.

“For my mom,” Samantha whispered. “For my grandparents. For my dad.”

Harry hugged Samantha tightly, lifted her off her feet, and carried her out of the graveyard. The dark shape and red eyes slowly lost what cohesiveness they had. The sound ended moments after the shape broke apart. The Dark Lord ceased to exist for the third and last time.

The two pieces of wand remained in Samantha’s hands. She held on to them until Harry settled her into his bed back in Hogwarts. She snuggled into the duvet. The calming thoughts and feelings Harry projected into her mind quickly led her to sleep. The blood cleaned away with a charm and a father’s hand running through her hair was the last things she remembered of the night.

Harry sighed once more. It was over. Tom was gone, for good. He turned and left his room. He knew the others would be in the Great Hall waiting for him. His mind was light. The deaths of the night were nothing compared to his baby. Some may look down on his methods, but they weren’t in his position. They hadn’t lived his life. They knew nothing that would change his mind or his heart.

The doors swung open. The faces that greeted him wore many different expressions. Dismay, fear, apprehension were some of them. Pride, honor, love, caring were others. Harry knew this meeting could go well or poorly at a very quick pace.

“Malfoy Manor?” Harry asked of those he sent.

“Charred remains, Harry,” answered a person from the left side.

“Good,” was Harry’s response. “Survivors?”

“None, from either location, Harry,” said Ron. “Bout time we got rid of them, eh?”

“Yes, ‘bout time,” Harry said. “Well, anyone have anything to say? You have time now.”

"Voldemort is truly gone, now?" Asked Arthur.

Harry pulled the two wand halves and showed them off. "This was his wand. Samantha broke it. His spirit faded, quite loudly, after that. I consider him gone for good. Any other questions?"

"Harry," Albus began, "You didn't need to kill everyone. I am disappointed in you. Two of them surrendered."

"How many rejoined him the second time?" Harry asked the old wizard. "His son, a fourth year, was going to kill me. The family lines that supported him this time were the same as before. Those families knew nothing but power and hate. Your constant hope in the good of others led to this happening not once, but three times. I will not do this a fourth time. They threatened my daughter. I told you what would happen if that occurred. I ended this the only way you can. Evil flourishes when good does nothing. Evil survives because good sympathizes and gives another chance.

"Your war was sixty years ago, Albus. This one was mine. It always was. My daughter was part of it, because you told me to let the ministry handle things last time. They failed then. I would be a fool to give them another chance. Now, the purebloods know what will happen if they try this again. They will lose their homes and their lives. Their families will be devastated. I had no problems making that call this time. They respect money and power above all else. Do you think they understood my point?"

"I think they did, Harry," Hermione offered. "The Slytherins know what happened to the Malfoys or will soon. Everything, actually. My guess is that they will choose their enemies more carefully. Your little speech to them gave them little room for misinterpretation."

"How will your own daughter see today's events, Harry?" Dumbledore kept at his guilt trip.

"She was raised by me, Albus," Harry said. "I taught her everything I learned from the last time. Never let your enemy come back. If they do, they will be worse than before. A dangerous opponent will learn from his failures. She learned from mine. She knows that when her life or her friends' lives are at stake, you fight to live and win.

“If you have any doubts, I will tell you she is sleeping quite comfortably right now. She is loved. Always has been. She doesn’t have the self-doubt I did. She knows she did the right thing. She is alive because of it. Tell her different, and you will have to deal with me.

“Now, I am going to bed and will see you in the morning. I have earned my rest. Hermione, Ron, Ginny, Weasleys, Professors, friends; goodnight.”

Harry turned and returned to his room for the night. He laid on his bed, next to his daughter, and fell asleep with his arm around her. *‘She is loved. Always has been, always will be. She knows love. She will be fine. I will see to it.’*

*‘Go to sleep, Daddy. You are keeping me awake. I love you.’*

*‘I love you too, Honey. After school lets out, we need to choose a home. I have a few to choose from apparently.’*

**The End.**